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THE

FAITHFUL STEWARD;

OR

SYSTEMATIC BENEFICENCE

AN ESSENTIAL OF

CHRISTIAN CHARACTER.

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BY REV. SERENO D. CLARK.

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"The committee selected to award a premium of $250 for 'the best approved treatise on the importance of Systematic Beneficence, and of statedly appropriating certain portions of income for benevolent objects,' report, that they have examined one hundred and seventy-two manuscripts submitted to them, several of which are large treatises, and a number marked by distinguished merit. They selected four, as in their judgment superior to the rest. Of these four, each was found to have its peculiar excellencies and adaptation to usefulness—this in one walk, and that in another. Literary merit, thoroughness of discussion, and a spiritual and practical character, each and all necessary, in their measure, to render a composition 'THE BEST' in the sense of the original offer of the donor, are to be found blended, in various proportions, in these several treatises, and rendered the task of decision the more embarrassing. The committee were thus unable to select any one, two, or three, as on the whole preferable to the remainder of these four. They therefore awarded the premium, which the benevolent donor has increased to $400, to be divided equally among these four manuscripts;" one of which is here offered to the public.

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THE FAITHFUL STEWARD.

PART I.

"GOD IS LOVE." Perfectly blessed in Himself, he desired that other intelligences should participate in his own holy felicity. This was his primary motive in creating moral beings. They were made in his own image—framed to resemble him in their intellectual and moral capacities, and to imitate him in the spirit of their deportment. Whatever good they enjoyed, like him, they were to desire that others might enjoy it with them; and thus all were to be bound together by mutual sympathy,—linked to Himself, and to one another; otherwise, they would not resemble their Great Original, either in feeling or conduct. But intelligent beings, unlike Him-

self, Jehovah, in consistency with his holy character, could never purpose to create. He thus must eternally abhor the covetous; and hence, with all the strength of his infinite nature, threaten them with everlasting death.

How glorious this idea of creation, and how beautiful the universe produced!—the whole mantled in the effulgence of the eternal throne; the Sovereign Creator upholding all ranks of intelligences in the hollow of his hand, and pouring into their bosoms the fulness of his own fruition; while their hearts, in turn, rise to the Source of their being in sweetest incense of joy and praise; each burning with a seraph's love to communicate his own overflowing enjoyments to those around him. Well might the morning stars have sung together when such a universe awoke to being.

The greatest good, the richest possession, then, of an intelligent being, is a soul in harmony with this original design of creation—a oneness of principle, of feeling, and interest, with God; in other words, *disinterested benevolence.* Truly, "It is more blessed to give than to receive;" for with-

out the good will the generous deed implies, whatever else we have, we must have sorrow.

But how little of this spirit is evinced by man in his fallen state. Those ties of love, that bound us to our Creator and to one another, are sundered; as a race, severed from the governing Centre of all, each has chosen a centre for himself, and is moving on in darkness and ruin; selfishness the rule, self-interest the end.

Benevolence is not, therefore, natural to man. To practise it requires the greatest effort; it is reascending to that lofty height whence we have fallen. Hence the importance of System in the great work of beneficence.

System in action implies a principle from which it proceeds. Fluctuating opinions and feelings produce fickleness of conduct; while settled convictions, stability of affections, and fixedness of purpose, give birth to persevering and methodical action. A system of beneficence must be founded on abiding principles and dispositions.

I proceed to show in the first place, the Duty of Systematic Beneficence thus founded.

I. *I argue the duty of systematic beneficence from the analogy of nature.* The Author of nature is the perfection of order. Whatever he does, he does systematically. He proceeded in the great work of creation with regularity. Order moulded the planets, and every star that gems the evening sky; it launched them forth in their orbits, and guides their glorious way, producing "the music of the spheres." Order stretched the very layers of the everlasting rocks like ribs around the earth, and shaped the crystals of the cavern. There is order in the structure of every spire of grass, of every flower and shrub, of every tree and trembling leaf; in the mechanism of every animal, from man in his godlike attitude, to the smallest microscopic tribes. All organic existences are preserved in being, nurtured, grow and mature, according to certain laws. Even the winds, that stir the petals of the flowers, breathing fragrance and health, and the tornado, that bows the forest and dashes navies, obey established principles. Now, shall there be order all around me, and in my physical frame, in the flowing blood, in the

heaving lungs, and chiseled limbs, while the accountable actions of this finely-knit and symmetrical form, especially the loftiest actions for which it was made, the diffusion of good, are exempted from this universal law? Such an exception, how incongruous! It would be an excrescence on the very vitals of nature.

II. *From the characteristic of Divine beneficence.* The supply of our physical necessities and comforts comes in the order of those natural laws already referred to. Social and civil blessings result from certain principles of mental, moral, and political science. Method is equally characteristic of our spiritual blessings. No sooner had man fallen, than God began to unfold the remedial scheme. But he is influenced by no impulses in accomplishing the wondrous plan. He rushes not to the result with an impetuosity indicative of a zeal that flames along its course uncontrolled by reason. But there is a steadiness of onward movement, showing that unwavering principles of order preside over all his proceedings. The world, the intelligent universe, must be prepared

for such a stupendous event as the incarnation and death of the Son of God; prophecies, promises, types, and ritual institutions must gradually open the scheme, ere the final development could be suitably made. After forty centuries of preparation, Christ came; and yet years must pass away, before, in that order of events which God had established, the crowning event of all could occur,—the propitiatory sacrifice be offered up. In extending the kingdom thus founded, the same order, the same adaptation of means to ends, is observable. The word of God, the Sabbath, the sanctuary, the workings of the Holy Spirit, and the co-operation of the individual reason and conscience, are all linked consecutively to each other, or work in beautiful harmony together. Thus, throughout the entire scheme of spiritual blessings, reaching from the opening promise of a Saviour to the incarnation; and from the incarnation to the judgment; and onward to eternity, everything is done systematically.

This is the result of the unchanging principles of the Divine Mind. They glow with a steady

heat, equally prompting him to activity at every moment. Hence, like the sun shining in its strength, God sends down unweariedly the rays of his love, both on the evil and on the good, crowning their days with "loving-kindness and tender mercies." Indeed, should the ardor of his love cool, or the hand of his power or grace be withdrawn but for a single moment, all our hopes would be dashed, our very existence cease.

From this characteristic of the Divine beneficence, the inference is irresistible. If man is bound by the condition of his being, to imitate God in his moral character and conduct, he must cherish the same abiding principles of benevolence, and carry the same steady hand in diffusing good. The ardor of his love may never cool; his hand of charity never weary. He must be god-like. With permanency and uniformity of conduct, imitative of his own, our Holy Sovereign will be well pleased. But with him who is wavering in his principles; vacillating and impulsive in his purposes of good; at one time toiling for others with the utmost earnestness, and then, for-

getful of their wants and woes for months together, he must be displeased. How unlike our Great Exemplar. He was *always* doing good. "The labor of his life was love." Reader, would you please your compassionate Saviour? Go, and do likewise.

III. *From the necessity of system to success in any kind of business.* One cannot accumulate wealth, acquire learning, rise to distinction in any of the professions or trades without system. Even the pleasures of life depend much on regularity; otherwise they cloy and become insipid. He, who is unsteady in his habits, now indulging in ease, and now straining every muscle; who, as some excitement arouses him,—such perhaps as the fresh inculcation of economy and industry, flares up and bustles about, resolves that his business shall henceforth be prosecuted with vigor and managed with precision, and in a few days relapses into his old, careless, inefficient habits, heedless alike of prudence and precept, gives little promise of success in any department of life. Or should one be perseveringly industrious, but

suffer his affairs to lie in confusion, like the material world at its birth, he would be deemed at best but a busy-body. If he intends to succeed, he must have some established principles and a fixedness of purpose, which will prompt to accuracy and method, would be the universal decision of the wise. This is reasoning correctly. But must men practise on system in providing the means of personal supply and gratification; while in the Divine work of relieving the sorrows and wants of others, all system is matter of indifference? Is order so important in the *accumulation* of property; while the *diffusion* of it, in obedience to God's commands, may be safely left to the spontaneous impulses of feeling? The more important any business becomes, the more essential is precision in its management. This is a universal maxim. Now, as beneficence, in its comprehensive import, rises superior to all other employments, so, if it ever reaches its highest possible results, it must be carried on systematically. How often does benevolence to the poor fail of accomplishing all that it otherwise might, were it

not exerted irregularly; whereas, when proceeding in equable flow, by encouraging frugality and economy, it fills even the dwellings of poverty with comfort. How much more efficient would our great benevolent societies become, were the contributions of the churches uniform, or uniformly rising like the waters from the sanctuary in Ezekiel's vision; so that those who conduct them might have sufficient data on which to erect their schemes for the future. It would infuse new life into all their operations; elevate them to a loftier position, from which they might stretch their arms around the world, and kindle joys reaching to heaven. Besides, is it not matter of personal experience, that when order enters into, and pervades our worldly business, we accomplish far more than when it is left to the driftings of fortune, or to the mere suggestions of the mind? And can any reason be assigned why the same practice should not be equally productive in carrying out the noblest work of our being?

Thus personal experience in other matters, observation, and theory, alike teach us that the work

of benevolence may not be left to the impulses of natural feeling—to the influence of lectures and appeals, or casual stimulants. It must be planted in principle, and issue in regular contributions, like the tree of life yielding her fruit every month, if we would have the blessing of many ready to perish come upon us. Those who depend on intermittent springs are liable to suffer thirst.

IV. *From the deep-seated depravity of the human heart.* Depravity is supreme selfishness. This, in unregenerate men, is the governing principle. Quick-sighted, ever on the alert, and lying, as it does, at the foundation of the active powers, it becomes the propeller of the mind. It leads to a series, and thus substantially to a system, of actions. They may not always be rational; yet, as they spring from a fixed principle, and proceed in an uninterrupted current, they may properly be termed systematic. Hence the natural man feels a constant pressure of motives to conduct pleasing to himself; and is thereby borne away on the maddening torrent of self-gratification. There

must be a counter-current; billow must battle with billow. The antagonist principle demanded is benevolence; and antagonist principles, coming in collision, must press with equal force, or one gradually gaining upon the other, will eventually secure the victory. The combatant, who is for a moment off his guard, or ceases to struggle, falls. As selfishness is always awake, benevolence must never slumber. The latter must be as spirited and persevering as the former. Hence, benevolence must be systematic in its operations, or it will be overborne by the ever-stirring energies of its opponent. Its series of acts must be as continuous and energetic as that of selfishness, in order simply to arrest the course of the latter; and to make advances against its headlong current, a strong additional force is requisite. A system, therefore, one founded in the depths of the soul, and bringing to its aid all the resources of reason and conscience, is indispensable to efficiency in the angelic work of doing good. System must be emblazoned on the banner of every benevolent society; and inscribed on the brow of

every man by nature selfish, would he bless the world by his munificence.

Especially is system necessary to encounter emergencies. Men of business not unfrequently meet with crises when their affairs are in a critical state. Numerous calls for money may come thronging in upon them almost simultaneously. Their nerves may become depressed, and things may appear darker than they really are. Besides, christians even may become worldly-minded, and their religious affections low. At such times benevolence will almost surely be submerged by the whelming tide of selfishness, unless buoyed up by well-established system.

V. *From experience, which shows the inefficiency of impulsive benevolence.* That liberality is sometimes the offspring of the kindly tendencies of our natures, is readily admitted. God, in making us social beings and helpers of each other's joy, gave us susceptibilities to sympathetic emotions. When objects of suffering are presented before us, our sensibilities are moved, tears flow, and the hand is extended in relief. But these emotions are

short-lived. The exciting object being removed, they soon expire. And though thousands have flowed into the treasuries of charity from this source, when an accomplished agent, with a soul heated to a glow with his theme, has stirred the sensibilities of his hearers as the trees of the forest are rocked by the tempest, or some other influence has violently swept the chords of the heart; yet it is a source of too little depth and durability to give vitality to the persevering work of beneficence, in a world cankered to its centre with corruption. Selfishness soon leads off the mind to other subjects; so that contributions can be drawn from the natural sympathies only by the repeated and almost continued presentation of the suffering object. But this course will ultimately defeat its own end; tending, as it does, to harden the heart, and thereby to seal up the very fountains intended to be opened. Accordingly, we find that those who have no plan of munificent effort, but give merely as their sensibilities are moved, usually contribute less and less as they advance in age; their susceptibilities to sympathetic emotion be-

coming hardened like the road over which the crushing wheel has rolled for years. Hence, though the product of impulsive benevolence may sometimes be bountiful, yet when we contemplate its workings for any lengthened period, its fruits are found neither uniform nor abundant. The soil is too thin for enduring fertility.

We find this exemplified in our churches where no system of charity is adopted. For want of stated times for contributions to the different objects, they are apt to be forgotten or neglected. They whose duty it is to make the appointments, are engaged in other cares; time whirls on; the year passes away, and no collection is made. Or if a few objects receive occasional attention, others are passed over for years together; proving to a moral demonstration, that what is done irregularly in the work of beneficence, is ill done. To this, the agents of our benevolent societies passing through our churches, can bear sorrowful testimony.—The same is true of the individual. Every one knows that what falls not into his regular routine of duties, is apt to slide from the memory.

This is peculiarly true of benevolence, for selfishness helps us to forget; and if the contribution come to our recollection, we are not ready to give just then; some debt must be first paid, some convenience purchased, or some other urgent call attended to. Thus he, who has no system in the bestowment of his bounties, is always finding excuses to turn off the edge of arguments and the force of appeals; though perhaps with the resolution of giving liberally at some future period. Here lies his greatest danger. The resolution satisfies his conscience; and while resting upon it, the opportunity to contribute passes away, and souls are lost; whereas, had he acted on principle, the donation, though inconvenient, would have been made, and souls saved.

Such is not unfrequently the mournful termination of impulsive benevolence. Tears may be shed over the anguish wrought; but tears cannot remedy the evil; this must flow on in wailing and woe forever. But it may be prevented by the timely admonitions of experience. For that selfishness can be suppressed, and benevolence sus-

tained, only by the strong hand of principle and systematic effort, is the voice of ages.

VI. *From Scripture.* All duties enjoined in the Scriptures, if contemplated in their principles, will be found subjected to the control of reason; and, if they lie under the control of reason, they must be conducted methodically. All acts of worship, from the first requisition of Divine homage given in Eden, onward through the successive generations of the patriarchs, were to be performed with decency and in order. The Mosaic economy was one of the most rigid exactness. The ritual prescribed to the Jews required the utmost method. The same law held in regard to the payment of tithes and their multiplied gifts to the Lord. This precision, with which every one must be struck in reading the Old Testament, is doubtless designed for the instruction of all succeeding times. But what is its peculiar lesson to us? It, at least, shows us that God is pleased with regularity in the conduct of his people; and not less in their beneficent transactions than in the discharge of their other duties. The same

principle of order is transferred to Gospel times. Here, there may be liberty, but there must be regularity. This is taught in that general commendation of Paul to the Colossian christians for the order and steadfastness that rejoiced him. (Col. ii. 5.) But if regularity in other things is pleasing to God under the New Dispensation, why is it not in this divinest work of an intelligent being? This is specifically shown in the injunction of Paul to the Corinthians,* for each one to lay by him in store on the first day of the week, as God had prospered him. Now, without pushing this text to extremes, and affirming that the Holy Ghost intended to require of all christians, in all circumstances and in all ages, to contribute a portion of their substance in charity every Sabbath, the passage most distinctly shows that God is pleased with systematic benevolence —with stated appropriations of income to objects of munificence. As order is nature's first law, so it is of the Scriptures.

* 1 Cor. xvi. 2.

System in our benefactions is thus clearly a duty devolving on all. It is alike the voice within and the voice from heaven. It cannot be neglected without imminent peril. It is a subject of vital interest. It must be deeply pondered. It must be earnestly prayed over. The great idea must enter, like a consuming fire, into the very heart's core, and inflaming it with zeal, bring forth fruit an hundred fold to the Lord.

One thing more. Every man is bound to make the most of his being. All his powers, both of body and of mind, are to be taxed to the utmost, and exerted in the most *effective manner.* Each duty, without intrenching on others, should be performed in such a way, as best to secure the end aimed at in the obligation. Manner may not be disregarded. If there is reason to believe that the end contemplated in the obligation to beneficence may be best reached by a course of systematic effort, the very fact should lead to its immediate adoption. At the close of the preceding arguments, without reasoning in a circle, this may be adduced as a consideration of no small force,

inducing every one to cast about him, and solemnly consider whether he is conducting his charities in the most efficient method; *manner* and *spirit* being as binding as the generous deed itself. And on this principle, every precept, promise, and example of revelation, enforcing benevolence, is really a precept, promise, and example, arousing to systematic benevolence. The same is true of the various incentives to this glorious work, offered in the ensuing pages; and in this light let the reader regard them.

In the second place, what is the Nature of a Scriptural System of Beneficence? This is an important inquiry. Every system, as we have seen, must be founded in principle—a principle rooted in the active powers, resting down upon the main-springs of the soul, so as to be moved forward by all the mental energies combined. But it must not only rest on principle; it must rest on right principle. The moral character of a system depends on the character of the moral feelings from which it rises; and it is the moral character of any scheme of action, which, under the government of God,

gives it permanent efficiency; for to succeed, it must have his co-operation and aid. Besides, a system of benevolence is designed to combat the selfishness of the heart; a principle, strong, subtle, insidious, and developing itself in ten thousand different ways. Diametrical opposition to this, therefore, must be its leading characteristic. The natural sympathies, and conscience, and reason, must, indeed, be enlisted in its service; but all these united are insufficient to support enduringly a system of munificence against this formidable antagonist. For selfishness may entirely submerge the sympathies, so that he who can weep with his bereaved neighbor at the grave of his child, may, with the malignity of a fiend, be inwardly pleased at the death of an enemy. Selfishness may so control the conscience, that it will utter no upbraiding accents; and so bewilder the keen-sightedness of reason, that one may put darkness for light, and bitter for sweet, and sin for holiness, while complacently feeling that he is standing on the everlasting hills of truth. Neither the natural sympathies, nor conscience, nor reason,

then, can form the substantial basis of a system of action which is to battle with the selfishness of the human heart. It must be informed with a higher and nobler principle. Holy love is such a principle. This, in its very nature, is superior to all other affections of the soul. The object on which it is fastened is the Great Supreme, and all other objects disappear before it, as the stars before the morning sun. A system, then, inwrought with this heaven-born principle, controlling, quickening, inspiring all the moral energies of the soul, may resist this mighty foe of the heart; and it forms the only insuperable bulwark to his malignant inroads. This position accords with the Scriptures. They approve of no external act, only as it proceeds from a holy heart; otherwise, they stamp it as self-righteousness or superstition. A system of benevolent action, resting on any other foundation, falls under the same condemnation; it contains no element of life, nothing truly pleasing to God. Men may endeavor to find other bases on which to rear schemes of charity; they may bring to the task the most penetrating

sagacity, and traverse again and again the secret windings of the mind, to find some other lurking principle which can resist and subdue the batteries of covetousness; but all their efforts will be vain. Whatever they may erect will be built upon the sand; the winds and floods will sweep it away. There is no foundation which can withstand the underminings of the depraved heart, and the shocks of a depraved world, but the rock of holy love.

PART II.

Systematic beneficence is capable of a twofold division. There is a general or universal system, binding indiscriminately and equally on all of every rank and condition; and a particular system adapted alone to the circumstances of each individual. The latter stands related to the former, as the edifice to the foundation on which it rests. This distinction must be kept clearly before the mind, if we would have definite views of our obligations relative to this important subject. In the ensuing discussion, I shall confine myself mainly to the general system; believing that if God's people are correct in sentiment, rooted and grounded in moral and christian principles, they will be substantially correct in practice. And as the particular or individual system grows, by a moral necessity, out of the other when fully em-

braced, being, in fact, involved in the practical part of it, I propose to give but occasional hints concerning it.

Practically considered, a system of beneficence consists in two things: the amount of property bestowed, and the frequency of stated gifts to the Lord.

Before detailing in full, therefore, the general system of beneficence, these two questions must be thoroughly discussed—1. What is the proportional amount of property or income to be given in charitable contributions? 2. How frequently should stated contributions be made?

The first of these is a point the most difficult for the depraved heart to reach. Self-interest clamors most loudly for the smallest sum possible. Her whole strength must here be encountered. But selfishness, properly so called, has nothing to do with the question. The rule determining the amount must be fixed upon, not only entirely without her aid, but in direct opposition to her insidious suggestions. It must also be a rule growing out of those principles which take hold

of, and bind the conscience; and therefore clearly taught in the Bible. This is a consideration which may not be overlooked. If we endeavor to deduce a rule from principles not found nor recognized in the Scriptures, the influence will be disastrous; we shall rather strengthen, than weaken, the covetous tendencies of the heart.

It has appeared to some of vast importance to fix upon a definite amount of income as each one's yearly contribution. A tenth has been named as the proportion divinely approved, in imitation of Jacob's vow to give a tenth to God of all that he should receive at his hand; and because the Jews were required to pay a tithe of their yearly increase for the support of the Levites. Arguments have been adduced to show that this ratio in charity is obligatory on all; at the same time, it has been acknowledged not to be enjoined in the New Testament. We think, however, the ground untenable; and all efforts to designate this or any other fixed proportion as universally binding, both inexpedient and unscriptural.

In the first place, it would not be equal. An

alleged requisition, not pressing equally upon all in its ordinary operations, cannot rise out of the necessary relations of the spiritual universe, and therefore is not essential to a moral government. It can be made obligatory on the conscience only by a positive precept from the Great Lawgiver himself. But no ratio of income, universally applicable, can be assigned, pressing equally upon all. While one's income may be large, his debts may likewise be large. Another's health may be feeble, his family numerous, and his expenses great; while his neighbor's constitution may be vigorous, his family small, and his necessary expenditures few. Thus circumstances may render it a greater sacrifice for some to give a twentieth, a fiftieth, or even an hundredth of their income, than for others to bestow one half, or indeed, the whole of it, and thousands besides.

One's entire possessions must be taken into the calculation. Take a simple case. Two men start in business together; both plan and toil for ten years. One has an expensive family, parents to maintain, children to support and educate; he has

been withal unfortunate, and has laid up scarcely a thousand dollars. The other has no family, has prospered and accumulated ten thousand. The eleventh year Providence smiles upon both alike; the income of each is a thousand dollars. Now, would it be equal to require of both respectively a hundred in charity?

Nor can any ratio of standing property and income combined be designated, ensuring equality. Though this might approximate towards equalizing the burden, still the same or similar causes would prevent a uniform pressure. Besides, calls on our benevolence are not always equally loud or imperious; and therefore, with the same means, more is demanded on some occasions than others.

Undoubtedly there is a certain amount of property, which, taking into view the whole circle of one's relations, he ought to contribute in charity. It is by no means contended that one cannot fix upon a definite amount for himself. This he may and should do. All that we aver is, that no general rule can be made, assigning that amount, because no general rule can meet the ten thousand

circumstances that modify individual cases; and, therefore, obligations to comply with it would not be universally felt. Besides, no one thinks of specifying certain proportions of labor and attention which all are equally bound to bestow on others; and yet, these are sometimes far more beneficial to the suffering than gifts of money. To assign a certain number of external acts employed in charitably distributing property, while we fix upon no definite amount of labor to be expended in beneficence, is making a difference without a reason; this being seen, the conscience will not be holden, unless some scripture precept can be found demanding the discrimination.

But could a ratio be found pressing equally upon all, it would not be desirable. Man, while under the influence of the natural heart, if he tries to please his Maker at all, endeavors to do it by external acts merely; when driven from this ground, he seeks to please him by acting out some principle of natural sympathy, conscience, or reason; when shown the fallacy of this, he endeavors still to discharge his duties in some way without

the *entire consecration* of the soul. Now, does not the advocacy of a general ratio obviously fall in with this depraved inclination, tend to flatter this pride of heart, and to encourage this aversion to entire self-immolation? Indeed, founded on this principle, the work of benevolence is extremely liable to degenerate into sheer superstition. The payment of the stipulated sum is soon thought to render one worthy of Divine acceptance; and thus, instead of gushing from the heart, charity becomes a mere mercenary business, scarcely rising to the dignity of a virtue. This the experience of the religious world proves, as is evidenced by the views and conduct of the Jews respecting tithes in the time of Christ; and at the present period, by the payment of periodical contributions in the Romish church.

Besides, as a general rule must apply to all classes and conditions indiscriminately, the bestowment of the designated sum would satisfy the consciences, not only of the poor, but also of the rich, who ought, unquestionably, to contribute oftentimes far more than one tenth of their an-

nual increase, or any other proportion which the most generous philanthropy might appoint; thus both rendering them deaf to extraordinary calls, and, when the truth, so agonizing to the carnal heart, that our all belongs to God, is pressed with vital intensity on the mind, affording a secure retreat to the tortured conscience.

Such an arrangement also would often fail to meet the yearnings of the Christian heart. The sympathy of the true Christian is as deep and far-reaching as human suffering. Neither one, nor two, nor three tenths, would be regarded as sufficient on particular emergencies. Such was the case with the Macedonians, of whom Paul says, "That in a great trial of affliction, the abundance of their joy, and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality. For to their power, yea, and beyond their power, they were willing of themselves; praying us with much entreaty, that we would receive the gift, and take upon us the fellowship of the ministering to the saints." The Christian king of the Friendly Islands felt the same burstings of a Christian heart. The mis-

sionary says of him: "He had not often gold or silver to give. But one time he had obtained ten pounds from the ship for food he had sold. How much do you think he gave to the missionary society? One pound? Five pounds? This would have been a great deal. But he did more; he gave the whole!"

It would not meet the requisitions of the command, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." Would an Irish lord, amidst the scenes recently experienced in his unhappy country, surrounded by hundreds and thousands of miserable beings, starving, sick, and dying, be justified in view of this law, by contributing to their relief a bare tenth of his income? Every noble heart will answer in the negative. These times of agony demanded far greater sacrifices.

Thus all efforts to fix upon a definite ratio of income or property of universal obligation, will give constant ground for questions of casuistry inevitably tending rather to screen the conscience, than to stimulate to generous activity.

But what does the Gospel teach us on this subject?

The religion of the Gospel begins in the heart. "Son, give me thy heart," is its fundamental precept. In the Gospel scheme, every individual stands by himself, on his own responsibility; he is bound by a personal tie to his Maker. The conduct it prescribes is entirely spiritual. It requires a burning heart, shedding its light and heat on all around. According to its code, every act must gush from holy love. It does not prescribe just the amount of action to be put forth, in any one direction; but the heart and conscience of each, guided by wisdom from above, are to direct him. It is thus with Angels and the redeemed about the throne. A holy heart, bathed in the truth of heaven, is all the general rule they need to enable them to discharge their duties, and to adapt themselves to the various circumstances in which they may be placed to eternity. Such is their moral state, that the least intimation of Jehovah's will sends them speeding on wings of fire to do his pleasure. The Gospel places man on earth in the same relation to him, and intends that he shall act on the same general principles.

It teaches us that all we have belongs to God, and that all we do must be done to his glory. A soul, permeated by this heavenly spirit, would find a knowledge of the destitution and woes of others, and an ability to relieve them, a sufficient stimulant and guide. Angel-like, it would send forth spontaneously the felicitating streams which the Gospel appoints.

This is the source and spirit of all Gospel benevolence. Says Paul, "Every man according as he purposeth" (desireth or chooseth) "in his heart, so let him give." There is to be no constraint. The working of individual good-will is to be the measure of individual bounty; for "God loveth a cheerful giver."*

* This principle does not apply to the support of a pastor. *Paul* does not put charity and the support of the pastor on the same ground. Compare 2 Cor. viii. and ix. with 1 Cor. ix. Other elements come in, modifying the result in the latter case. 1. The idea of wages. 2. The idea of copartnership. Each member of the church, on principles of common honesty, is bound to bear his share of the common expenses.

But though no given proportion of property is definitely enjoined, there are certain general principles laid down, by which we may make approximations towards a proportionate amount, and never be at a loss respecting individual gifts in specific instances when the heart is right. The following are such.

The great truth that God has a supreme and inalienable right in us and in all that we possess. "The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith the Lord of Hosts." "For every beast of the field is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills." "Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine."—The injunction to dedicate ourselves to God. "I beseech you, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service."—The requirement to love God and his cause and interest more devotedly than the dearest worldly possession. "If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and

his own life also, he cannot be my disciple." "Whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath cannot be my disciple."—The command to love our neighbor as ourselves; that we are to supply his necessities, and relieve his sufferings, so far as lies in our power, with the same willingness that we do our own.—The intimation that our gifts should be such as to call into exercise our faith and self-denial. The poor widow cast into the treasury of the Lord "all that she had, even all her living;" with which generous sacrifice Christ was well pleased; and Paul commends the Macedonian Christians, because they gave not only according to their power, but beyond their power.—The promises to the benevolent. "The liberal soul shall be made fat." "He that watereth shall be watered himself." "It is more blessed to give than to receive."—The duty of imitating Christ, who "suffered for us, leaving us an example, that we should follow in his steps;" that we should "walk even as he also walked."

Also, the very large amount of their income, (which has been estimated at not less than one

fifth) required of the Jews to be given for the support of religion, and in charity, was intended to convey to us similar instruction. For though the law of tithes or double tithes is not binding upon us, the great sacrifices which they were required to make, are designed to have a *moral influence* on succeeding generations. It is not the idle record of a bygone race, or of a dispensation that has vanished away; it utters a voice to us; it is the living exemplification of a principle which we are bound to adopt. If even the poor among the Jews could give so much, the poor can still give bountifully in proportion to their means,—and, were they disposed, how profusely might the rich lavish their munificence. With the fact before us of the great sacrifices the Jews were commanded to make for the support of religion in their own narrow bounds; when we consider the breadth of the field we are called to cultivate,—the spiritual necessities of the perishing millions of our race, the opportunities to reach them, the worth of the undying soul, the revenue of glory its salvation will yield the Saviour, what sacrifices

ought the poor, at the present day, to make in their penury, and the rich in their abundance, to promote the glory of Christ in the salvation of souls; and how terrible the doom of those who refuse.

These principles, requisitions, promises, and examples, show us that our sacrifices should be *great*, and the amount of our contributions *large*, when either the worldly or spiritual necessities of others demand our aid; while they leave the treasuries of benevolence to be filled by the spontaneous flow of each individual soul.

The desire, therefore, to fasten on the consciences of men the obligation to contribute periodically a certain portion of their income or property, as universally binding, is not to be gratified by arguments drawn either from reason or revelation. We may resort to no artificial means. We may trust in no machinery which does not work and glow with the living fires of the heart. Love, conscience, and reason, must be the originating and guiding forces. We must fall back upon, and confide in, these vital principles of holy conduct.

First the heart, and then the act, is the Gospel scheme, and we may not reverse the process. To attempt it, and to say, "What we seek in a system of beneficence, is not a benevolent heart, but benevolent *actions*;" is to come in open collision with the spirit of the Gospel. It is apparently a lurking disposition to induce men to discharge the duties of beneficence, without laying their hearts on the altar of God, and keeping them perpetually burning there; whereas Christ requires the *heart*, and the heart *always;* and then that conduct which inevitably bursts from a consecrated soul. As Paul says of the Macedonian Christians, "*They first gave their own selves to the Lord;*" and then their wealth, to be used as he should direct.

Indeed, the process necessarily gone through in determining, from general principles, the particular amount it becomes our duty individually to bestow in charity, Christ evidently intended should be a means of *moral discipline*, which we cannot safely dispense with. Its influence, though not generally realized, is far-reaching, almost magical. It strengthens the intellect, elevates to a noble

independence and disinterestedness of feeling, gives stability to character and energy to purpose, leading on to thoroughness of self-inspection, earnestness of investigation as to the personal claims of God, and childlike simplicity in submitting to their authority. Just glance at its workings in the present instance. As Christ has told us, in order to know his doctrine we must do his will, so in order to ascertain the exact sum we are to contribute in benevolence, we must cherish a heart in sympathy with his own. Holy love must perpetually glow in our bosoms; otherwise, we shall sometimes fail in the correctness of our conclusions. Thus the first impulse of benevolent feelings puts us in the way to increase them; for every desire to give must be attended with a scrutinizing estimate of our motives, and a constant struggle with selfishness, lest the latter gain the ascendency, and mar the beauty of the deed. The legitimate result of the process, therefore, is a deep and watchful piety; while the works of beneficence, thus determined, never degenerate into superstition or self-righteousness; and its

obligations will seize at once and unrelaxingly the consciences of all.

The conclusion, therefore, at which we arrive touching the amount of our charities is this: it should be such as our means, a distinct knowledge of the wants of others, and a heart of overflowing love, shall prescribe; leaving each one to his own solemn convictions of duty, amenable alone to the bar of God.

But it may be objected, if beneficence is thus left without the specification of some stated amount, selfish, or but partially sanctified men, will not give as liberally as they ought. Perhaps they will not. But all we can do is to press on their attention the commands of Jehovah, and the claims of a dying world—claims, as strong and affecting as those which brought the Saviour from the throne to the cross; and telling them what the Apostle, enforcing benevolence, told the Corinthians, "He who soweth sparingly, shall reap also sparingly; and he who soweth bountifully, shall reap also bountifully," leave them to settle the matter of their covetousness with their Final

Judge. We may pray and weep over them; but we may use no efforts to move a single individual from that moral basis—his own conscience—on which God has placed him. Here he must stand; and here we must be willing he should stand; while he himself is under infinite obligation to lay bare his bosom to the energizing influences of truth, and cheerfully yield to its sway.

2. *How frequently should stated contributions be made?*

System implies order, regularity. Systematic beneficence implies regularity of contributions, or of stated periods for appropriating property to the Lord. In regard to the frequency of these statedly recurring periods, there are different opinions. Owing to the variety, extent, and complexity of men's avocations, some find it convenient to make consecrations accurately proportionate to prosperity, much more frequently than others. Hence some advocate the weekly period, some the monthly, while others plead for still longer intervals. Indeed, to fix upon a definite rule of universal application determining the frequency of

periodical contributions, will be found nearly as difficult as to ascertain the precise ratio of property to be bestowed. There are, however, certain leading principles, which, if contemplated with rectitude of heart, will enable us to please God by the wisdom of our benefactions, no less in this respect than the last.

1st. As a stepping-stone to a series of more important considerations, showing that these periods of consecrations should very frequently recur, I remark *that most may set apart some portion of income without inconvenience as often at least as capital or labor makes returns.* These are the occasions when Providence pours his treasures into our bosoms; when alone we can determine precisely how the Lord has prospered us, and consequently how much we are able to bestow. Hence if no designations of income to charity have been previously made, or if they have not been sufficiently large, these opportunities of coming to some definite decision with reference to the proportion of the bounties of Providence we shall devote to purposes of beneficence, may not be passed

over; and the consecration, not to say the disbursement, should be made *immediately*, while the idea that our possessions are from God is fresh in our minds, and before selfishness shall seize them as her own. Procrastination is often but giving heed to her treacherous voice, and ere we are aware, she carries us captive. As we receive our increase from the hand of God, like faithful stewards, we should set apart the portion belonging to others without delay. To indulge ourselves by holding them up before us, and doating upon them as our own, will but inflame our covetousness; and we shall be tempted to rob the needy of their portion. This is not hypothesis; facts prove that money is contributed far more cheerfully when in a loose state than after it becomes fixed property. This rule, directing frequency of consecrations, conforming itself to individual circumstances, is oppressive to none.

But the capital of some makes returns only once a year; of others, only once in a series of years. To such this rule can be by no means applicable; for the wants and sufferings of those

whom God has made it our duty to relieve, often demand far more frequent distributions; while, in a variety of instances, it calls into exercise our benevolence too rarely to suppress the selfish tendencies of the heart,—a point, which, in rearing a system of beneficence, may never be overlooked. Other principles must therefore be noticed.

2d. *Our contributions should be so frequent as will tend to repress the selfish, and keep alive the benevolent affections.* We should give so frequently as to impress and nurture the conviction that we were made not only for ourselves, but for others; and that the noblest use of property is its distribution to the needy. This conviction it is difficult to engender, and harder to keep alive, but it is best produced and quickened to energy by frequently engaging in the duties of charity. Benevolence, to become strong, must be cultivated; and it is so much of an exotic in the human breast, that it needs the most earnest and assiduous care; while selfishness, such is its strength and tenacity of life, can be deadened and kept in abeyance only by repeated and vigorous

assaults. As a general rule, that system, as to frequency, should be chosen, which comes most strongly in collision, and wrestles most powerfully with the selfishness of the heart. Some, I know, would deal gently with this obnoxious principle; rather humor than goad it; and on this ground urge the importance of frequent, and, of course, small contributions, which will scarcely be felt; maintaining that on the whole a larger amount will be collected. But I would not urge frequency of donations on this account. I would advocate benevolence only on those principles which will give it life and vigor for eternity. The Bible says nothing about humoring the selfishness of the heart, of adopting plans of beneficence that will be scarcely felt. Its language is, "Crucify the flesh with the affections and lusts." It directs us to *die* unto sin or self. It makes no compromise with covetousness. It bids us not rock it to sleep, but slay it. Let every one then stand up in the lofty sternness of his spirit, and adopt that system as to frequency in giving, which, other

things being equal, is most crucifying to the carnal heart.

But a system of almost continued contributions will not be peculiarly crossing to our avaricious desires, if trifling sums are given, or those greatly disproportionate to property. In this case, selfishness, instead of being disturbed, may be rather cajoled into a species of benevolence; though a species as sickly and unsubstantial as the vine that grows amid the damps of a vault, never aspiring to heaven as the place of its nativity. But when the sums are so large as to demand personal sacrifice, the self-appropriating principle feels it keenly. The uninterrupted repetition of such gifts is a continued draught on its life-blood. Its remains even in the Christian's breast are galled and lacerated by the repeated attacks, and sometimes writhe as in "the dying strife." Especially is this the case with one who has amassed his property by almost daily additions;—by sums, perhaps, smaller in amount than those which the calls of humanity now claim almost as frequently at his hand. He sees his wealth going nearly the

same way in which he acquired it, and he feels that its very pillars are giving way. Thus frequency in contributions, if sufficiently large, is usually most crossing to selfishness, and most destructive to avarice; and as a system of beneficence is instituted mainly to combat these evil principles, we should allow but short intervals between our deeds of charity.

3d. *We should give so frequently as to form a habit of giving.* Jeremiah says, "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good that are accustomed to do evil." This shows the susceptibility of our natures to the formation of habits; and their controlling power over us. The injunction of Solomon, "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it," is founded on the same mental tendency. Habit, indeed, governs half the world; it is like a self-moving machine, when once started, continuing, of its own accord, in the same direction and with the same velocity. Let one accustom himself to harden his heart in view of genuine objects of

sympathy, and it will be exceedingly difficult to unlock his bosom to the loudest calls of benevolence. On the contrary, he, who accustoms himself to spend his money as fast as he acquires it, will never be likely to hoard for future supplies. A habit of giving would follow the same law, and greatly assist us in the duties of charity. But infrequency of beneficence, giving only once in six months or a year, or at irregular intervals, will never form an efficient habit of giving. It must be a regular and oft-repeated act; for it is a frequency of the same acts in succession alone, which creates habit. Our benevolence, therefore, should go forth in reiterated acts, like the monthly rose, flowering and shedding its fragrance as regularly as its seasons recur. The spirit of benevolence must thus be wrought into the very texture of our being; so that we shall move forward, scattering our alms about us as naturally as we perform the common duties of life. This thought is of immense importance to the young, and to those engaged in the pursuits of wealth. For the latter, especially, from the very nature of their employ-

ments, and their necessary trains of thought, are inevitably acquiring habits of accumulation; and, unless counteracting habits of benevolence are also acquired, their desires of gain will assume the tyrant, and the Divine curse, threatened against the covetous, will rest upon them forever. They are hanging over an abyss, and their only safety, under God, is in winding around their hearts the iron cords of habit in beneficence, and, therefore, in giving frequently.

4th. *The Scriptures favor the idea of frequency in giving.* Christ says, "Give to him that asketh of thee." The duty of charity is here clearly founded on our calls and ability. But in this world, where we have the poor always with us, calls on our benevolence cannot be otherwise than frequent. Again Christ says, "Freely ye have received, freely give." We frequently receive, we should therefore frequently give. Paul directs the Corinthian Christians, "Upon the first day of the week, let every one of you lay by him in store as God has prospered him." This suggestion of the Apostle may probably be adopted as a general

rule by a majority of Christians at the present day; and every one should make it a matter of solemn consideration and earnest prayer whether it is not his individual duty; for all must conform to it in spirit. But without maintaining that every one, under whatever circumstances, is required to lay by something weekly for charitable purposes, the principle here taught us most unequivocally binds us to great frequency of stated contributions. From this decision of the Holy Spirit, according, as it does, with the teachings of reason, there can be no appeal.

5th. *The experience of practical men, as to the best means of acquiring property, evinces the same principle.* The experience of the world on this point has been embodied in maxims such as these: "Take care of your cents, and dollars will take care of themselves;" "Save your ninepences," &c. Men of wealth have often remarked that they acquired their property by frequently storing away small sums as they could spare them. I knew a man lay up several hundred dollars by making it a rule to put into a bag kept for the purpose, every

fifty cent piece that came into his possession. We have here the development of a principle in accumulating a fund to meet the contingencies of life. We may apply it to benevolence, and take men of business and opulence on their own ground. If this principle will fill one's own treasuries, it will fill the treasuries of the Lord. Let it then be regarded. I would sound it in the ears of the million who are delving the earth for gold, and startle them from their delusive dreams. I would that it might echo and re-echo till its solemn utterances should make every votary of Mammon tremble. Hear, ye rich men; give ear, ye who are pursuing the bubbles of wealth! is it christian, is it right, to adopt principles of prudence and self-denial in filling your own coffers, while you refuse to act upon the same principles in replenishing the streams of mercy? No. Conscience and God answer, No. The perishing heathen, the dying pillow, the judgment-seat, the wailings of hell, all answer, No.

Then let every one, whether indigent or affluent, frequently lay by in store sums for charity as

God shall prosper him, though they are but small; and let him do it with the same whole-heartedness, earnestness, and perseverance, as he would to increase his own wealth; and rarely will he be unable to relieve the cries of misery. He will have no occasion to offer the excuse, "I have no change." He will have dollars in store. The history of benevolence proves this. I have known a sabbath-school class, by each member's giving 10, 15, or 25 cents a month, contribute an amount during the year, which previously they would have thought impossible to raise. This is only one instance among a thousand. Let the principle be acted upon; a trial is easy. Scripture and reason cannot both be wrong.

But how shall these frequent contributions be made by those whose capital yields returns only at long intervals? According to the proverb, "Where there's a will, there's a way"—it can be either actually or virtually done.

1st. By saving expenses. Water, running into a vessel no faster at a given orifice than it flows out at another, will retain a constant level; and if

with the same influx we would have it issue at a higher orifice, we have only to stop or lessen the lower one. Thus, if we would have our possessions rise to the *giving point*, we have only to stop the leakage—check expenses. This hint may be of service to the poor, and not inappropriate to the rich. Many expend their ready money as rapidly as they receive it; making their calculations to do so; and thus, during the interval between one return of capital and another, plead their inability to meet the frequent calls of benevolence. But is this a valid excuse? Could they not be met by sacrificing some social pleasure, some luxury in drink, in food, in dress, in furniture, in display? or by foregoing some convenience, the expense of which is equivalent to the pledged sum? Vast multitudes are deprived of these luxuries, and even of what we deem necessaries, during their whole lives; and cannot we forego the gratification of them occasionally, that we may thereby relieve the suffering, or save the deathless soul? True, this will require self-denial; but has

not God demanded of us self-denial? Dare any one offer this as an excuse?

2. Every one engaged in regular business knows, or ought to know, what, taking one year with another, have been the annual proceeds of his labor or investments. Now, on the supposition that the Lord will prosper him as heretofore, he can form some reasonable estimate of the amount, (extraordinaries excepted) which he ought to contribute to charitable purposes weekly or monthly during the period his capital is making another revolution. This amount may be appropriated in actual donations by most business men, as they usually have more or less loose money on hand. By those who cannot do this, it may be charged in a book kept for the purpose at the close of each week or specified period for appropriation—"one, five, ten, or fifty dollars due to charity,"—and on the return of their capital, pay this debt as conscientiously as they pay any other. Then, if on the reception of their entire product, they find they have not given as much as the claims of the destitute demand, they can easily make up the deficit.

This scheme will of course call into exercise our faith; for it is acting on the belief that the Wise Disposer of events will be as merciful to us in the future, as he has been in the past. But ought not his past goodness to strengthen our confidence in his willingness to continue that goodness? Christ requires us to live by faith on him, and ought we not to *give* by faith on him? To refuse to exercise this faith in the circumstances, partakes of ingratitude. Besides, to decline making any, or but such appropriations as are exceedingly disproportionate to our property, until we have actually received the return of our investments, is to act on the principle, that we will not give to others until we are *certain* how much God will bestow upon us; in other words, that we will not trust him,—whose loving-kindness, as the brightest star of our destiny, has shone upon us in darkness and storm,—for a single blessing which is not actually in our hands. Must not such conduct be exceedingly provoking to Unwearied Love?

Or this process of previous consecrations may be varied thus. The proportion consecrated may

be a certain ratio of income fixed on a sliding scale, on the principle that the greater the profits, the greater the proportion which may be spared. For instance, on the first day of each week, or month, or quarter, or year, one may consecrate a certain proportion of his profits of that week, month, quarter, or year to the Lord, say five, eight, or ten per cent., in case they rise to a specified amount; and if they rise to a certain sum beyond this, he may fix upon a still greater proportion, say twelve or fifteen per cent.; if they rise to an amount still higher, the proportion appropriated may be still larger, say eighteen or twenty per cent., so that his benefactions to the destitute shall be in some degree commensurate to the goodness of the Lord to him.

In these last suggestions, a vital principle in systematic beneficence is developed, which challenges our special attention. *It is, the duty of making provision for the dissemination of charity previous to the reception of our income.* This is a point of immense importance, and may by no means be overlooked; though it is a point which

Christians have too much lost sight of. They have been awake neither to the enjoyments nor obligations growing out of it. It is time that its solemn utterances should pierce the heart, and arouse the conscience of every follower of the Lamb, and startle him from his slumbers. They should reverberate through every dwelling in Zion. It is a principle of universal application. All, whether rich or poor, should make it an abiding rule of conduct. There is no difficulty in the way. While, of course, the rich should fix upon a higher proportion of income than the indigent, each one can decide upon some percentage adapted to his peculiar circumstances, and at stated periods lay up in store as the Lord prospers him. Every one, as St. Paul clearly taught the Corinthians, should have "a savings-bank" for charity.

The results of this principle would indeed be most happy, on whatever ground the previous arrangements should be made. In the first place, it would greatly increase the sum total of our contributions to the Lord. It would be acting on an acknowledged maxim in the acquisition of

wealth. We know if we have a debt of ten dollars, an hundred dollars, or any sum within our possible ability to pay, the money will be by some means obtained; whereas, otherwise it will be extremely liable to be consumed in the ordinary flow of expenses. Thriving men, sometimes on this principle, keep constantly a little in debt by the purchase of valuable property, knowing that it will stimulate their industry and frugality to meet the anticipated payment. Here men are not afraid to trust the past goodness of the Lord; why will they not be equally wise and confiding in the godlike work of benevolence?

It would also deepen our sense of personal devotement to Christ; leading us constantly to feel that our minds employed in planning, and our hands engaged in labor, are the Lord's, and must be used in his service. It would likewise promote the ease and cheerfulness with which our appropriations would be made, and materially enhance our enjoyment, in a work which, though self-denying, brings us into most intimate fellowship and coöperation with our blessed Lord. Even when

engaged in our most ordinary avocations, it would induce the impression that we are laboring for Christ as well as for ourselves; and thus procuring the means of extending the glorious gospel, whose precious promises are our daily support and joy, and which opens to our view, beyond the skies, the crown and the harp, with which we hope to bow before the throne, when our bodies are crumbling in the grave. What greater happiness can the Christian experience on earth than the continued consciousness of co-working with his Saviour in diffusing through the world these richest enjoyments of our being, and kindling anthems whose enrapturing notes shall never falter?

Thus, if we would make antecedent provisions for charity; if we would exercise suitable self-denial, forethought, and confidence in God; if we would *contrive* as earnestly to save something for munificence, as we do to hoard, our sources of charity would be replenished; we should seldom be unable to make, at frequently recurring periods, either actual or pledged appropriations, and be happy in our work.

An Inference.—If that degree of frequency should be adopted which is best calculated to curb the selfish inclinations, then the more deeply we are engaged in worldly pursuits,—the stronger and more riotous the avaricious desires become, the oftener should the appointed period of our benefactions recur; and not only so, but the greater the necessity that our gifts be commensurate with our means; for otherwise, although we may give frequently, and perhaps congratulate ourselves on our generous liberality, the curse of God may be hanging over us for our parsimony.

PART III.

We are now prepared to present in detail that general system of beneficence, demanded alike by Scripture and reason, and best fitted to secure permanent and ever-growing results.

While universal, it must be a system in its nature adapted to each individual, and binding on the individual conscience; one founded on, and embracing, the entire man,—his reason, his heart and will, including views and principles, feelings and affections, with their inculcation, general purposes and resolutions, with corresponding action. The tree must be symmetrical from its roots to its topmost bough. Beneficence may not stand alone; it must spring out of a consistent character, must be a branch of activity, harmonizing with other shoots from the common stock. Else, it will be like a verdant twig on a rotten trunk,

growing up amid broken and withered limbs, the sighing monitors of its own decay.

Some, I know, would advocate a system of beneficent actions without the heart; others would direct it merely to one or a few favorite objects. But these are views neither broad nor deep enough. It is grafting consistency on inconsistency. True benevolence is a spirit of universality, and hence, of harmony, gushing forth in streams numerous as our relations. No reason can be assigned why one should contribute of his property to save the souls of others, while he neglects his own; or spend his substance for the spiritual benefit of those at a distance, while he neither puts forth personal efforts, nor manifests a holy example, to rescue perishing immortals immediately around him. A system thus partial has a worm at the root; its protecting shadow will be as transient as Jonah's gourd.

I. *There must be a system of intellectuat views, and a harmonizing train of desires and affections flowing naturally from them.*

I will, therefore, present a series of principles,

sentiments, and obligations, which, by being lodged in the intellect, and quickened by the Spirit, warm the heart, and awaken appropriate feelings; thus forming not only the basis, but a constituent part, of an efficient system of benevolence.

I would premise, however, that these intellectual views may also be regarded as *inducements to munificence*, and thus to the adoption of an individual system, fitted to each one's peculiar relations; for they will thus operate from the nature of the case; the very object of fastening them systematically in the understanding being, that penetrating to the heart, and binding themselves on the conscience, they may lead on to rational activity.

1. We should bear in mind that we were not made for ourselves, but for the service of God. Let the truth, "Thou art God's," be written with fire on the heart, as well as its legitimate consequence, that all that appertains to our being is his;—our strength, our health, our powers of reason and love, our capacities of acquisition, our

property, our time, our all, so that its thrilling accents, "All that thou hast is God's," will ring in our ears at every turn. As Jehovah created us for himself, has preserved us for himself, and redeemed us for himself, we ought at once to acknowledge his claim and devote ourselves to his service. This self-surrender is the true foundation of all giving to the Lord. Any system of beneficence not built on this must crumble. Giving one's self is an earnest and pledge that everything else will be given; on the contrary, while self is withheld, there is no warrant that our possessions will be yielded, much less that God will accept the offering. But self being surrendered, all is virtually conveyed over to the Lord and sealed forever his.

2. That all right feeling is feeling as God does in the same circumstances, and in respect to the same objects. There must be a holy sympathy of soul with him,—a oneness of affection, of desire, of will, of purpose. We must feel concerning ourselves as God does, who desires to see our hearts burning with the same hallowed love that fills his

own. We must feel concerning sinners as the Father does, "who so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life;" —as the Son, who exchanged the abodes of peace for the abasement of flesh and the agonies of the cross;—as the Holy Ghost, who is willing to dwell in our polluted hearts, consuming the dross with his own vital energies. We must imitate the angels, who, sympathizing with the Triune Jehovah, strike their lyres with new and more rapturous hallelujahs at the repentance of the returning sinner. No other feelings in kind or strength, in proportion to our capacities, are right feelings. The sacrifices of Christ were, indeed, stupendous; but we must be willing to make as disinterested sacrifices for a perishing world; else we are not in sympathy with our crucified Lord. Let us often visit the scenes of his sufferings, hear the groans of Gethsemane, and witness the blood and agony of the cross, and there learn what it means to have the same mind "which was also in Christ Jesus." Let us make this love the great standard

of feeling and action, and cultivate the habit of trying ourselves by this, and this alone; inquiring daily, "Oh, am I as benevolent as Christ?" "Do I sympathize with him over a ruined world?"

3. That God created us to occupy a position near himself. As all our springs are in him, communion with him was to be our life and joy. We were to be full of God; to see him everywhere and in everything, and to value nothing only as the work of his power, the fruit of his love, or as showing forth his praise. We were to dwell so far up the mount, that earthly objects would appear insignificant; approach continually its lofty summit, till our views of the world and the glory of it should harmonize with God's views of them; for not only were our feelings to accord with Jehovah's; but also our sentiments concerning sublunary things were to be in unison with his own. So familiar were we to be with the glories of our spiritual existence; our tastes and moral sensibilities were designed, by intercourse with Infinite Purity, to become so elevated and refined, that the glitterings of gold, and the fascinations of

wealth, would fail to charm. Our home was to be so near the throne, that its light would perpetually shine in upon our souls; its spirit always bathe our spirits; so that seraph-like, possessing the benevolence of heaven, we should breathe the love of heaven on all around.

4. That merely becoming rich is not the great object for which we were sent into the world. Man's being aims at a higher goal. This is a point which should be distinctly understood; and to bring out the thought clearly, I will make two distinctions. 1. The very obvious difference between benevolence and indifference to property or its acquisition. Benevolence means "wishing well," and beneficence "doing well," to others. Benevolence, then, bears no resemblance to undervaluing money. I know that the gentleman who used to *skip* his silver dollars on the fair bosom of the Connecticut for the amusement of his friends, and he who freely tosses around the social glass to his boon companions, may be pronounced generous fellows. But such may be as entirely destitute of all true benevolence as the most de-

termined miser, and, what is more deplorable, as offensive to Infinite Love. Property is God's gift, and he does not require us to undervalue his gifts, but to use them with his own good-will to men. To be willing that our labor or capital should be unproductive is no indication of a faithful steward. 2. There is a difference between the design of becoming rich, and that of acquiring property. The latter, under certain restrictions, is a duty incumbent on all. One may have a peculiar talent in this direction;—a turn for business, a sagacity to lay plans, to foresee the favorable changes in the commercial world, and all that shrewdness so essential to success in the career of opulence. It is an endowment of heaven, and should be used in such a way as heaven will approve. While regulated strictly by the principles of Revelation, it should be employed in the acquisition of property, as a means of usefulness. But it is a common opinion, that money may be made solely for the sake of accumulation. Parents instil the idea into the minds of children, so that they grow up with the conviction, that the great

end of life is the procuring of wealth. Implanted in the tender mind, and nurtured with its strength, it assumes the tenacity of a first principle. But it is altogether erroneous. It is the product of the selfish heart. No sentiment is more fertile in covetousness, or more blighting to that generous humanity, which it is the first object of the Christian to cherish. It is a sentiment grovelling in its tendency, bowing multitudes, it is feared, even of professedly good men, to a species of slavery, over which devils smile, and angels weep; knowing that it obstructs the flow of thousands into the treasury of the Lord. A sentiment so hurtful should be eradicated from the public mind. It should be discarded from the individual breast. The toils of pecuniary gain must be pervaded by a loftier motive. It should be sought, not as a gratification to avarice; but, in the fear of the Lord, by industry, by economy, by frugality, by forecast, by the most profitable investments of capital, and with a heart full of mercy, as an instrument to enlighten the ignorant, and relieve the sorrows of human-kind. This idea has not

taken so firm a hold of the christian public as its importance deserves. How useful might some, who have little talent either for learning or public speaking, become, would they disinterestedly devote their lives to the acquisition of money for purposes of beneficence. Wealth, pursued with this spirit, will never beget avaricious desires, and thus acquired, will be a treasury of blessings to multitudes here, and a source of enjoyment to the pious owner forever. Its worth will survive the grave. Let it be an abiding thought—money may be invested where it will yield an eternally increasing revenue.

5. That in laying our pecuniary plans, we should be governed by a single view to the glory of God. The plans we adopt must be chosen because, in our deliberate judgment, we can do more to advance Christ's interests by prosecuting them than in any other way. Every act sustains relations of moral influence. Every kind of business or method of carrying it on, has certain relations which will modify its results, and, perhaps, its moral bearings, either on our own usefulness, or

the spiritual well-being of the community at large. Now we are bound to engage in that business, and adopt those schemes, whose results, considering these wide-spreading relations, will be most favorable to the kingdom of Christ. If we lay our plans recklessly, without regard to their moral tendencies, or shrink from these moral discriminations respecting them, we evince anything but a will in harmony with the Divine will. I know some fondly cherish the opinion, that their sagacity or peculiar tact for money-making at least is their own; and that they may employ it in devising such pecuniary schemes as they please, provided they are strictly honest, and do not interfere with the privileges of others. But this is not true. This reference to the Divine glory sheds the sunshine of heaven over all our employments, and must be the guiding principle of all our enterprises. It is also indispensable to any sustained system of munificence. If our schemes have ultimate reference to self, we shall be likely to use their proceeds as selfishness shall dictate; whereas, if our plans are laid with a view to the

honor of God, we shall be disposed to use their results for the promotion of the same great end. This is a truth of incalculable importance to our present subject. It should be bound to the conscience of every Christian, and burn there with such intensity that it can never be forgotten.

6. That God made us to be almoners of his bounty to others. Reciprocity is the pillar of every social system; it is of the human family. This principle was practically developed in Eden. On this ground, Paul argued that there should be equality between those who are in want and those who have abundance. (2 Cor. viii. 14.) Every man was designed to stand like a conductor of the electric fluid, to convey the influences of heaven to those around him. Our Creator has made the duty of benevolence as obligatory as that of justice. One is as much bound to help others, and thus, unless in very extreme cases, to contribute of his substance for the benefit of the needy, as to be honest. When, therefore, we pass a portion of the good things of life to others as they are conveyed to us, we are fulfilling the great end of our

social being; when we grudgingly retain it, we are defeating that end. This sentiment must be riveted in our minds. It is a hard lesson for selfish men to receive; yet it must be learnt. It is indeed the noblest idea of our natures; the link that unites us to purer intelligences.

7. A lively remembrance of the Source of our blessings; realizing that they are all streams from the Father of mercies. Had he been other than Jehovah, they would long ere this have been stayed. For how have we sinned, and forfeited every claim to good; and yet he has continued to uphold and refresh us. We have repeated the sin, and under aggravated forms,—abused his bounties, despised his Son, grieved his Spirit, disregarded his warnings, and slighted his entreaties; and still his blessings have continued to flow as if nothing could provoke him to withhold them. What unutterable goodness! What exhaustless mercy! Surely the gifts of such mercy should be devoted to the works of mercy; and how more appropriately than in aid of that wondrous scheme which the agonized Jesus died to accomplish?

While we enjoy our blessings, let us turn our eyes upward to the overflowing Source, and while we gaze, let the streams of gratitude gush forth. As we have freely received, freely let us give.

8. The importance of praying over the gifts of Providence, and the varied calls of charity. As the reception of our income should be one of the special occasions of consecrating a portion to the Lord, so in the gladness of the moment of its reception, we should make it our rule to decide as to the amount to be thus consecrated on our knees before God. Also, when the claims of the destitute are presented, let the amount of our contributions be fixed upon so far as practicable in the same way; determining, at whatever sacrifice to our own feelings, to give just what God requires. Prayer, while a privilege at all times of doubt and perplexity, is a special duty on such occasions;—first, because, when alone with the Searcher of hearts, brought up, as it were, into the full blaze of his presence, our consciences will be quickened, and speak truthfully; while the humble attitude of the suppliant is peculiarly fitted to inspire

gratitude, and render it effective;—secondly, because such are hours of special temptations; the adversary of all good and our wicked hearts combining their efforts to prevent a generous liberality; and there is great danger that selfishness, rather than mercy, will gain the ascendency, and, under artful guises, control our determinations;—thirdly, because our decisions on such occasions are some of the most influential in their consequences, both upon ourselves and others, which we are ever called to make in the common routine of duties. Take a simple instance. The question whether we give to the Bible Society one dollar or ten, fifteen dollars or twenty-five, is virtually whether we will send forth for the enlightening and felicitating of this dark and wretched world, four or forty, sixty or a hundred, volumes of the Word of Life. And when, aside from all the distorting and hardening influences exerted on our own moral natures by a grudging refusal to meet the calls of benevolence, we consider the civil and social melioration which has attended the pathway of this heavenly light, together with its refining

and sanctifying influences on the individual soul; when we stretch our thoughts into the eternal world, and catch the songs of joy, unuttered and unutterable by mortal tongues, which will thrill forever the souls of the redeemed, what acts of life can the thoughtful mind contemplate, demanding more solemn consideration, more fervent prayer, than such decisions?

Thus the practice of coming to our determinations of charity with prayer, a practice involving, as it does, both mental and moral principles of the first importance, and even leading on to interminable consequences, may not be neglected. We should cultivate, therefore, a docile temper, a simple, child-like spirit towards Christ. We should cherish such vital nearness to our Lord, that we may commune as freely with him as friend communes with friend; feeling that we can and would do nothing, even in the common affairs of life, without his aid and guidance. It is said of a lady in one of our cities, whom an intimate acquaintance urged to spend a few days with her in the country, that she replied, "I should like to, but I don't

know, it may not be best;" and added with great simplicity, and in agreement with the spirit of her life, "I will go and ask my Saviour." Thus, on the reception of worldly treasures, or in determining beforehand what proportion of our expected increase we shall appropriate to the Lord, we should go to Jesus with the same sweet simplicity and earnestness, crying, "Lord, what proportion of these thy bounties shall I share with the destitute?" failing not to devote that portion which our consciences, enlightened by scripture, shall dictate when kneeling before the mercy-seat.

9. The responsibility of maintaining a healthful and enlightened conscience in respect to benevolence. The Bible is the great teacher and rectifier of the conscience. We must in the first place, then, take fair, impartial, disinterested views of all the precepts, examples, promises, and teachings of the Scriptures on this point. We must investigate them thoroughly, and be sure that we obtain precisely the mind of the Spirit. Dim or distorted views either cripple the springs of action, or give them wrong direction. True, the

scriptural standard towers high, and shines brightly. Some would obscure its brightness; would wrest those passages most vividly presenting it; would convince themselves that so great sacrifices as some, in their zeal, have prescribed, are not required; that we are permitted to enjoy our own interests, and, to a great extent, seek our own happiness; and if we barely obey the suggestions of natural sympathy, and manifest common generosity, it is enough. They would bring down this exalted standard to our own diminutive stature, so that we can measure ourselves by it without inconvenience. But all such efforts are high-handed rebellion, and will prove utterly vain. God has placed it on a pedestal high as the eternal throne, and there it will stand and burn forever. We must bind our consciences to this standard; they must rise to its height, and shine with its radiance. If to our selfish hearts it appear a blood-stained cross, we must nail them to it, and let them bleed and agonize there. To gratify our selfish desires, God will never lower his claims. We must come up to them. If unwilling to do it in time, we

shall meet them in all their solemn realities at the final bar; if we have been obedient, there receiving the smile of our Judge; if not, his everlasting frown.

Secondly, we should keep ourselves informed of the spiritual wants of our race. Every one is bound to be in earnest in this work. He should strive to enstamp on his heart a full-drawn image of the world scathed by sin. We should realize how great a portion of our globe is yet untouched by the vivifying light of the Cross; that the desolating systems of idolatry, of Mohammedism, of Romanism, and other false religions, are now overshadowing and blasting the nations. We should search for distinct knowledge of the intellectual degradation, of the moral corruption, of the oppression, wretchedness, and woe, of the groans uttered, and the tears shed, by the millions now subject to their galling sway, "as for hid treasures." Ignorance on these topics, at the present day, cannot be excusable. The organs of the various benevolent societies come weekly or monthly to our doors, detailing scenes of sottish

ignorance, of pollutions and misery, which cause philanthropy to weep. They are indeed distressing to the feeling heart; and I have sometimes thought there were those, who shrink from the affecting view of a world ravaged, enslaved, and tortured by sin, lest it should work too strongly on their sympathies, and thus forcing the guards of covetousness, open their treasures against their more settled purposes; while others have been too heartless in their investigations. But this is treason to the Divine government; it is an unwillingness to know exactly our relations, and thus the claims of the human family on our regards. Such treachery and indifference cannot go unpunished. Did Christ shrink from contemplating the loathsomeness and woe of our outcast race? He not only contemplated, he shared our sorrows. Let every one then survey the world as it is, and let its appalling scenes glare on his conscience.

In the third place, we should hold up before our minds striking examples of benevolence. God has raised up some with great hearts, who have given bountifully in proportion to their means, to pro-

mote his cause. Such were the poor widow, who gave "all that she had," the Macedonian Christians, whose liberality exceeded their means, and the King of the Friendly Islands already mentioned. Such was the late Mr. Goodell of Vermont, who, with a house and farm not estimated at over $1,000, contrived by labor, frugality, and self-denial, to pour his hundreds and tens of hundreds into the treasury of the Lord. Such were the late Mr. Smith of Hartford and Mr. Cobb of Boston, "the sweet savor" of whose names awakens the kindliest associations, and whom God sustained, made cheerful and happy in all their sacrifices for him. Such was the aged African of Jamaica. He had earned, while a slave, ninety-six dollars. Being afterward emancipated, he came to the missionary, and offered the whole for the service of Christ; and when told it was too much, replied, with the most generous devotion, "No, *I want to give it all.*" Such was the poor colored woman, who, while she had no dependence for support but the labor of her hands, gave $60 at one time to educate pious young men for the

Gospel ministry. "When she offered the above sum, the agent refused to receive it all, until pressed by the humble donor, who said that she had reserved five dollars; and that she hoped to earn enough to provide for her wants in her last sickness, and for her funeral." This is said to be but a specimen of her liberality; and her hopes in regard to her earthly wants were not disappointed.

Perhaps in the small circle of our personal acquaintance, we can number some few, who, with souls more elevated and spiritually refined by grace, have bestowed in benefactions all their income; peradventure, even common farmers and mechanics—such as have fallen under the notice of the writer—who, after frugally supplying the wants of their families, have generously given the remaining proceeds of their labor to the Lord.

On these, and such as these, we should fix our eyes; they are stars of the first magnitude which God has fixed in the dark canopy of time as guides. We may not be able to give as they did; but the sacrifices they made, we can and ought to

make. If we seek to ward off the force of their example by arguing that they gave too much, or by referring at once to professedly good men who have given far less, we may reasonably conclude that covetousness is still grasping and palsying our christian sympathies. Such efforts are clearly but the struggles of selfishness, to ease the conscience of the dart. For, from such generous deeds, the voice does, and will come inevitably, "Go, and do likewise."

10. The felicity of beneficence. That "it is more blessed to give than to receive," is the voice of inspiration. Jehovah's felicity flows mainly from that fundamental element of his being, disinterested or holy love, and its infinitely diversified and glorious workings. He created us in his own image; and when this love has possession of our hearts, and our conduct is in obedience to its laws, the mental machine works in harmony, and the result is enjoyment; but when the opposite principle controls, its movements are obstructed, and the result is sorrow. It is a law of our being, as fixed as the ordinances of heaven, that we

drink the richest draughts when holding the cup of enjoyment to another's lips. Happiness eludes the grasp of the pursuer; while like a flower that sheds its sweetest fragrance when crushed, only tread it under foot in the eager pursuit of another's good, and its subtle influence vibrates through all our frame. The blessedness of self-denying efforts for the salvation of souls cannot be estimated. It is godlike; it is harmonizing with our dying Lord; co-working with him in carrying out the redemptive scheme; wakening a joy which the harps of eternity alone can utter. "They that turn many to righteousness shall shine as the stars forever and ever." What a revenue of glory will forever flow into the enraptured souls of such men as Baxter and Doddridge, and Swartz and Martyn, and Goodell and Norman Smith, as they cast their crowns at the feet of the Saviour; for it is the highest fruition of the redeemed that all their glory is ultimately Christ's. Who, as he contemplates the perpetually increasing joy and brightening exaltation of a soul restored to the image of God, becoming through un-

numbered years more and more assimilated to its glorious Head, would not participate in a work so transporting in its results? Perhaps you have had some feeble conception of its blessedness, some half-waking desires to become a standard-bearer in the hottest of the fight with the foes of God,—a minister or missionary of the Cross, so as to labor more efficiently in saving souls. But in your circumstances you find it an idle wish. Do you hence smother these kindling emotions and fold your hands in despair? The Gospel may be preached by your alms. There are many links in the chain of influences which God employs in rescuing sinners from death; and one of the most effectual at the present period, is the bestowment of funds to send forth the heralds of salvation. These desires, therefore, that feebly burn in your breast, may be gratified. In an important sense, you may preach the unsearchable riches of Christ to the nations, thereby becoming a coadjutor in a work, the sublimest of heaven and the most felicitating to man. This is an interest-

ing truth. Let it blaze quenchlessly before the mind, warming the heart to mercy.

11. The sin and danger of covetousness. Covetousness is unlikeness to God, to our compassionate Saviour, to the blessed spirits before the throne, whose only symphonies are love. When indulged, the frown of the holy universe is fastened upon us. It is violating the laws of our mental frame,—an instrument so exquisitely attuned that the slightest vibration of its delicate chords awakens notes of joy or wailings of sorrow; and it thus becomes the source of irritation and remorse here, and of disquieting premonitions of the most appalling woes in the world to come. Hear what God hath spoken: "But fornication and all uncleanness or *covetousness*, let it not be once named among you. For no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor *covetous* man, who is an *idolater*, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. Let no man deceive you; for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience." This is terrible language, and explicit as terrible. According to the

plainest principles of interpretation, covetousness is here put in the same category with some of the worst vices that degrade man and provoke the wrath of heaven. Indeed, if benevolence is required equally with justice, then covetousness is as distinctly a violation of the divine law as injustice; and he who hoards at the expense of the suffering poor, is as guilty in the sight of God as he who rifles another's goods. And is it strange that he who nurtures a principle thus pernicious in its tendencies, should be excluded from heaven? No. Let us not flatter ourselves; we cannot indulge in covetousness without imminent peril. Who will dare thus offend his gracious Sovereign, and incur his wrath? Let this bright, but awful truth, flash in our faces, deterring us from the fearful sin, and inducing a sleepless vigilance over our selfish propensities, lest they grow with our growth, and strengthen with our increasing wealth.

12. The dignity and responsibilities growing out of the fundamental truth before partially unfolded, that God, under the gospel, having given us general principles and laws touching benevo-

lence, has left the amount and frequency of our contributions to our own decision. The position we occupy under the new dispensation is full of interest and solemnity. As it is one of peculiar dignity, it is one of peculiar peril. God has now raised us to the true platform of intelligent and moral beings; given our reason and consciences free scope to exercise their own energetic and controlling powers. He has, indeed, always given man this prerogative, but in a higher sense under the Gospel than before; in other words, placed him in a position better fitted for the development of his whole being. He has thrown him more entirely on his personal responsibility and the decisions of individual judgment, by laying down general principles from which he is to ascertain his every-day duties. All the noble powers of the soul, directed by the Spirit's influences, are to be brought into full operation and work in concert; the heart, without impediment, concurring with the reason; the purposes, with the affections. This is "the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free.'

Paul has beautifully illustrated this subject by comparing the condition of a son before and after becoming of age.* While a minor, he is kept in subordination to his father; "under tutors and governors," his judgment in the management of affairs is under the control of another. But when he comes of age, he is elevated to a new position, assumes new interests and new responsibilities. He must then reason, judge, and act for himself. So under the Jewish dispensation, God dealt with our race as minors; left them not to the direction of their own individual wisdom—to form specific rules from general principles; but led them by definite precepts; not such always as rise out of the nature of things; but such as he saw best fitted, by a sort of foreshadowing, to prepare them for the more glorious state to which they were approaching. Hence all those positive laws, rites, and solemn festivals—appointed "days, and months, and times, and years," tithes and double tithes to which they were in bondage. But when Christ came, this bondage was broken. We were eman-

* Gal. iv.

cipated from this system of tutelage; henceforth, breathing the spirit of adoption and enjoying the freedom of sons, we were to act according to the dictates of our sanctified hearts and enlightened judgments, like beatified spirits, who, swayed alone by reason, conscience, and love, in the highest sense free and intelligent, speed on their course in harmony with Jehovah. So, under the dispensation of grace, every act must spring voluntarily from the mind, enlightened by comprehensive views of Scripture principles. Charged with obligations inalienable as our very being, we are sent forth on the career of probationary existence, amenable alone to our own consciences and the bar of final awards. God, so to speak, has reposed confidence in us, and it may not be abused. This is true in relation to charity, as well as to other duties. For the free discharge of this duty is one of our most solemn trusts. Each one, enlightened by the great principles of disinterested benevolence, is left to the decisions of his own mind in shaping his conduct and alms to its requisitions. To be permitted to judge for ourselves in matters of such

high and solemn import is an exalted dignity. But to every degree of dignity and privilege, there is attached an increase of responsibility.

Such is our present attitude in relation to the work of benevolence. Now shall we abuse this confidence, despise our privileges, and show ourselves unworthy of our almost angelic exaltation? Shall we make this liberation from the specific requisition of tithes "an occasion to the flesh," an excuse for less pecuniary sacrifices than the Jews were subjected to? What ingratitude! How displeasing to our Heavenly Father who has raised us thus high!

Hence, exemption from tithes, instead of relaxing our obligations to beneficence, rather strengthens them. As charity is purely a matter of voluntariness, the whole soul must be enlisted in it. We must not only guard against a betrayal of our trust, but against dispositions in the least at variance with its duties. We must keep our hearts in sympathy with Christ; lest, failing in sympathy with him, we fail to imitate him.

Let these responsibilities, together with the

ingratitude and contempt of God's favor implied in their non-fulfilment, be earnestly contemplated. Let us tremble lest we make the privilege of a more spiritual beneficence, an excuse "for withholding more than is meet," and turn the blessing into a curse.

13. That benevolence is the measure of personal piety. Personal piety is personal resemblance to Christ. "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus." Christ's character is essentially love. This induced him to die for lost man. Now just so far as we resemble Christ we shall imitate him, and, therefore, feel for those on whom the wrath of God is still abiding. And just so far as we feel for them, we shall be willing to do for them; and just so far as we are willing to do for them, we shall contribute of our substance in proportion to our means to relieve their spiritual necessities. So that our beneficence or sacrifices for the extension of the Redeemer's kingdom, will be the just measure of our love to him. This truth we should wear in our hearts. We should make it a principle to give that amount which we

shall be satisfied to recognize as the exponent of our piety, and be content that others should thus regard it; such as we shall be willing to pen down and hang up in our bed-chambers, so that we can contemplate it every evening and morning as our full estimation of Christ's dying love;—such that after counting our herds and flocks, examining our barns and granaries, surveying our merchandise, and reckoning up our dues, we can enter our closets and pray for the conversion of the world without blushing before God. Does any one shrink from this criterion of his piety? I fear he will shrink away from the presence of his final Judge, and bury himself in the darkness of hell; his works and conscience alike testifying his unfitness for the world of light.

14. That the true mission of the church in the present age is beneficence. Though the gospel has been preached nearly 2000 years, yet a deep night of spiritual darkness is still brooding over the greatest portion of the world. Millions on millions have no knowledge of the Saviour, and other millions have no right appreciation of his

truth and grace; while, blinded by sin and fascinated by its treacherous charms, they are treading their way, rank after rank, to woes everlasting. God's providence seems now to be moving upon the spiritual chaos, preparing it for the reception of light. Obstacles to the introduction of the gospel into benighted regions are fast giving way. The kingdoms spread beneath the sun, from north to south, from China to the farthest verge of the west, are seemingly in the posture of waiting for evangelical instruction. The Macedonian cry is coming up from the four winds. It is made to the church, the sacramental host of God's elect; and *they must answer it.*

God appoints, in some respects, special duties to different ages and nations. It was the peculiar mission of European Christians in the sixteenth century to break the yoke of papal supremacy; of England in the time of Cromwell to waken those notes of ecclesiastical and civil freedom which are still reverberating among the mountains of Europe, and shaking dynasties; of our fathers to achieve the political independence of the United States,—

to plant the genial tree of liberty, and water it with their blood. Now what does the providence of God indicate as the special ministry of the church in the present age? It is written all over the face of the world. We learn it in the awakened condition of heathen, barbarous, and half-civilized countries; in the stir of intellectual energy which is sweeping over the kingdoms, jostling thrones and alarming monarchs; in the tottering pillars of corrupt religions, and of long-established institutions of iniquity; in the progress of governmental science in connection with political liberty, and the extension of the arts of civilization; in augmented facilities for travelling, together with increased efforts for education, and the consequent quickening of mind; in the degradation of those "who know not God," the wants of seamen, of the oppressed, of the spiritually destitute both in our own and other lands, and in the charitable movements of the times. All these seem to declare unequivocally that the special work of the church in this age is benevolence—to toil, to endure privations, to make sacrifices of ease and of prop-

erty to evangelize the nations. God has opened channels flowing past almost every man's door, ready to convey his donations to distant regions of the globe, carrying light and salvation wherever they go. The appalling condition of the heathen in bygone ages has been as great and pitiable as now; but never have there been so many available opportunities to reach them. These opportunities impose new obligations.

We have seen in a preceding part of this essay, that our bounties should be in a compound proportion to calls and ability. This is a principle which the present generation would do well to consider; letting it penetrate the very heart's core. To meet such emergencies as are now transpiring on the moral stage, perhaps, was one reason why Christ designated no specific ratio of income for charity. He foresaw there would be crises when no proportion would be adequate, and when the christian heart would yearn to give more than his income, even all his living. And may not the present be such a crisis?

Indeed, the multiplied opportunities afforded us

of invading the dominions of the prince of darkness plainly intimate that the present is a crisis demanding the most generous sacrifices for God. The sigh of every breeze that sweeps over the blood-stained regions of idolatry declares it. The cries and outstretched arms of millions sinking into the everlasting gulf declare it. Then let it be laid up in the mind as a settled truth, that it is our peculiar ministry to break the chains of ignorance and superstition, to demolish the habitations of cruelty, to crush the thrones of intellectual and moral enthralment, to overthrow the temples of idolatry, and bring up man from his long degradation to reunion with God through the blood of the Lamb. There has probably been no age since the foundation of the world, which has demanded so great contributions as this, and, perhaps, no subsequent age will, till the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose. At least in a few generations we trust that Gospel light shall illumine every shore. Then there will be no such urgent calls on our charities; certainly none pressing with such undying interests. This, therefore,

is emphatically the age of *giving;* for the bulk of the church can aid effectually in bringing about the happy consummation of millennial glory in no other way. Would that Christians of the present generation could be induced to look at this truth in its intense application to themselves individually. Would that its accents could be made to ring over every hill-top, and echo through every valley in Christendom; startling the soldiers of the cross to deeds of love, as the voice of Peter the hermit once bristled with arms the plains of Europe to shed the blood of infidels.

Not long since, thousands were starving and dying in Ireland. A cry of anguish came up, and thousands of generous American hearts responded to the call. This was noble. It was thought to be an especial occasion for benevolence. Who did not feel that every Irish landholder should have shared his abundance with the suffering and dying poor around him? But what is the death of the body to the death of the soul! What is the temporal destruction of a few thousands to the eternal damnation of hundreds of millions! Was

it the duty of the wealthy Irish to feed their starving neighbors? And since the providence of God has made the remotest of earth's dwellers who are perishing for lack of vision our neighbors, should we not supply them with the bread of heaven, and thus prevent untold agonies? I ask every candid reader, is not the present a *special occasion* for benevolence? and if the church is to be the instrument by which God has determined to work in restoring the kingdoms to his Son, will it not be such an occasion till that blessed period arrives, when there shall be nothing to hurt or destroy in all God's holy mountain?

15. The duties growing out of the possession of property in view of death, judgment, and eternity. The obligations imposed upon us by the possession of wealth may be irksome, but we cannot escape them; we must bear them to the judgment. In our pride we may resolve that we will use our money as we please; but God commands us to use it as he pleases. A vivid sense, then, of the tremendous scenes before us should be ever associated in our minds with ideas of property.

We should realize how our wealth will appear in the final hour, as its pleasures and enchanting illusions begin to fade from the dying eye, and as we reflect how short and unsatisfactory, like "a dream when one awaketh," all these enjoyments have been. Rioting amid the luxuries of affluence, and giddy with its bewildering joys, these may be unpleasant thoughts. But why regard thoughts of that which we cannot avoid, unpleasant? We must not only *think* of these dread realities, we must *meet* them, and experience all their joy or woe. Then let us realize, now and always, how all our uses of property will appear at the bar of God, where the thought of every misimprovement will be sharper than a serpent's fang; how, in eternity, as we contemplate those who might have been saved by our liberality in undying misery; how, if we are lifting up our eyes with them in torments; how, if, while we ourselves shall be saved as by fire, we behold them excluded from those blissful seats by our covetousness. Let each one put these searching questions to his own conscience; and let him take

heed that his gifts be such, that their remembrance will not only sweeten his dying moments, but diffuse a fragrance over all his future being.

16. The worth of money hoarded or spent unnecessarily, contrasted with the worth of souls as gems in the Saviour's crown. The true value of wealth as a worldly good we fully appreciate. It contains no hidden excellence which the circumstances of life conceal. But the true glory of a soul redeemed the mists of time obscure. Our attachment to the world and the hallucinations growing out of it, prevent its full appreciation. But soon all this illusion will vanish. Both will stand before us in their true light. One will be seen to be vanity as it is; the other to possess a worth which no language can express;—a worth consisting not merely of the endless blessedness and glory it is itself capable of enjoying, but also of the glory that will redound to the adorable Trinity through its redemption. Take a position most favorable for its true estimation. Transplant yourself into the heavenly state; contemplate a blood-washed soul in all its peace, its joy,

its ravishment, as it circulates about the throne of love, approaching nearer and nearer to its blissful centre, constantly increasing in capacities, and more and more joyful in its high hallelujahs, till it shall reach that astonishing height where it shall enjoy more blessedness in a single hour, than Gabriel has enjoyed since the moment of his creation. Behold it, as it shines, a star, in the Saviour's diadem; gaze upon it purifying and brightening there as revolutions of eternity's time move on, till it shall attract the admiration of the heavenly throngs, and call forth from their wondering harps symphonies louder and more rapturous than have yet been heard in that world of sweetest hosannahs. The comparative worth of money hoarded or wasted, and of the ransomed soul to itself, to the Saviour who redeemed it, to the adoring hosts whose fruitions are enhanced by the displays of grace evinced in its redemption, will be then clearly seen. Oh, how trifling will that money which has been squandered or grudgingly withheld from charity then appear, contrasted with the results in glorified souls of what

was cheerfully and prayerfully bestowed. The condition of the churl and the liberal, how different then! He who hoarded most will then be found the poorest; and he who gave most with the greatest sacrifices, the richest.

17. The brevity of the period allotted us to labor and to make sacrifices for the salvation of men. "A point of time, a moment's space," is all we have. What we do in charity, the labors we perform, the privations we suffer, must all be accomplished or endured soon. The distresses we relieve, the souls we save, the joys we inspire, must feel the quickening hand of mercy without delay. Time is on his rapid wing. Thousands who need our help are perishing daily; the entire generation now occupying this stage of toil and probation, the great Destroyer will speedily sweep from the scene. Almost "in the twinkling of an eye" we shall stand together before the judgment throne. He who died to save the poor as well as the rich, the heathen as well as the evangelized, is now speaking from heaven; "whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might."

These are some of the intellectual views and obligations which should be *systematized* in the mind, forming both inducements to, and a constituent part of, systematic beneficence. They should lie like blazing fuel on the heart, kindling their appropriate feelings and affections. I have briefly unfolded them, as a specimen of that process of reasoning and personal application, which, according to our mental laws, when attended by the Holy Spirit, is fitted to soften and harmonize the mind preparatory to benevolent action; a process which all, as rational beings, are bound to engage in and carry out. I know this part of the system requires unpleasant work. Most are willing to feel, but they would feel without principle; and if they act, they would act only from the impulse of the moment. They shrink from introspection; from working on their own hearts through the laborious operations of the intellect, so that the affections may be at once both right and rational. But if we would see the gorgeous palace towering in symmetry and grandeur, unpleasant work must be done; the rubbish must be

removed the soil excavated, the marble chiselled into form, and the unsightly timbers erected. Without these, though it might glitter in the sunbeams, it would be but a gossamer tissue. So this mental part is the bone and sinew, the life, of a system of beneficence. Confined to resolutions and conduct, its movements would be like the effects of galvanism on the muscles of the dead—unnatural and spasmodic. The truth is, there can be no system of action without some system both of intellectual views and of the moral sensibilities. All inconsistency among Christians arises from defects in one or other of these respects. The fountain is not invariably at the same height, and therefore the stream alternately swells and sinks.

Resolutions are proverbially frail; and they are so, because they rest not on a mind consolidated by principles, and a heart glowing like a furnace with corresponding feelings. When resting on such a mind and heart, resolutions are not frail; but invincible as adamant.

Our purposes of charity, therefore, must rest on

an unshaken foundation; and in order to this, the principles and considerations fitted to promote benevolent sentiments and feelings must be pressed on the mind, till in view of them the bosom warms, and throbs, and swells, and bursts forth in high and determined resolves. It is not enough that they pass like a burning ray across the mind, producing a single flash of benevolence. What is needed is a continuation of the same effect; and for this, the same cause must continue to operate. It is important, therefore, that these truths be systematically applied. Seasons should be set apart for daily meditating and reasoning upon them, attended by earnest supplication for the impressing influences of the Holy Spirit. The mind must thus be drilled to reflection upon them till they become principles of action, so vital and permanent, that a shape and inflexibility shall be given to the moral sensibilities, which no wear of time or circumstances shall change or efface.

This is the only process by which the soul can be brought into, and kept in, that state of unity implied in volition; especially of that abiding

unity implied in a general purpose, without which no scheme of action can be long sustained. This, too, is the only method by which unhappy influences exerted on the heart by the pursuits of gain can be counteracted. As one engages in active business, and his property accumulates, his thoughts usually become more engrossed, and his love of money increases. Why is it? Precisely on the principle recognized by the Psalmist, "While I was musing, the fire burned." It is a law of our mental nature, that the more we think of any subject naturally pleasing, the greater interest we feel respecting it. Now the management, the proper investment, and safe keeping of property, must engage, more or less, the attention; and owing to the extreme selfishness of the heart, are very liable to awaken a lively interest. Hence, the more people are employed in the acquisition of affluence or competence, the more covetous they usually become. This influence, so chilling to the generous affections, can be resisted only by a counter process of reflection. The truth that ourselves and all we have belong to God; the extreme self-

ishness of the natural man; the insufficiency of worldly good to satisfy the cravings of the soul; the dangers attending acquisition; the obligations and privilege of giving; the benevolent mission of the age; the spiritual wants of the world; the worth of a soul redeemed; and all those great and solemn considerations fitted to incite to munificence, must be presented before the mind as frequently at least as ideas of property, in order to counterbalance the influence of the latter; and, indeed, more frequently, so as to repress the strong tendencies of the selfish heart, which the avocations of gain are so well calculated to invigorate. This can be done by no merely external system of benevolent action, any farther than such a system has a reflex influence on the moral feelings. Farther than this, the effort would be like attempting to stop the floods of the Amazon with a bulrush.

The great work, therefore, in erecting a system of beneficence, must be wrought in the soul,—in impressing views and regulating affections. For this there can be no substitute. This deep and

steady current of truth and thought, is to the mind in connection with the Spirit's operations, what showers are to the earth. If there are none, it soon becomes parched, and verdure withers; if they descend frequently and copiously, the ground is filled with moisture, vegetation blooms, and fruits ripen; springs burst forth, the streams dash along the valleys, sweep through the meadows, and pouring into the ocean, roll their mountain waves around the world.

II. Standing on this high ground of established principles and correspondent affections, we are prepared to take the second step in a universal system of beneficence; consisting in the exercises of the will in the formation of general purposes and resolutions. These should be made with a solemn sense of the responsibilities of our being; of our relations to the world and to the judgment-seat; and with a full conviction of our own weakness and entire dependence on the grace of God to assist us in their fulfilment.

Reader, with this humble reliance on Divine

aid, will you now make the following resolutions your own?

1. As a foundation to all others, I solemnly consecrate myself, soul and body, to God in an everlasting covenant.

2. I will prayerfully endeavor to keep my heart in sympathy with the great principles and duties above unfolded.

3. I will make the benevolence of Jesus Christ, in its spirit and design, the pattern of my own, constantly carrying about the conviction, that I must practise great self-denial, and make continued sacrifices in imitation of my dying Lord.

4. I will make unremitting war on the selfishness of my heart, knowing it to be the worst of evils; and fully purposing that it shall never influence my decision, either in regard to a general scheme, or a particular act, of beneficence.

5. I will thoroughly and candidly consider the spiritual destitutions of our country and the world; the peculiar mission of the church in the present age; and manfully, and with a whole heart, make the renunciations thereby demanded.

6. I will regard my health, strength, life, and property, as valuable only as instruments of advancing the kingdom of Christ; and therefore hold them all without reserve at the call of God.

7. I will seize every opportunity for doing good by example, by conversation, by labor, and by contribution.

8. I will daily and prayerfully consider whether the circumstances of the age in which I live do not require of me as great sacrifices in alms-giving as were made by the Jews in contributing two tenths of their income to the service of the Lord.

9. In laying all my pecuniary plans, and in all my labors to carry them into effect, I will have the glory of God uppermost in view, and therefore make it one of my leading objects to acquire property for distribution; being thus, according to the injunction of Paul, "not slothful in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord."

10. To give to charitable purposes such portion of my property as God, by his Word and providences, seems to demand, I will deem as sacredly incumbent upon me as to make an economical ex-

penditure of it in the support of myself and family.

11. For the sake of strengthening the benevolent tendencies of the soul, I will perseveringly cherish all its generous impulses by doing or giving as they shall dictate, so far as scripture and ability prescribe.

12. I will fix upon a system of giving which shall be made solemnly and prayerfully in view of my circumstances and calls; in the clear light of God's Word and of the awful retributions of the last tribunal. As to amount and frequency of donations, I will endeavor to make them such as I shall wish they had been, when, bowing before the great white throne, I shall gaze into the face of my crucified and exalted Saviour; actually participating in the fruits of his unutterable sacrifices for me.

13. Cherishing, amid the toils of gain, an abiding sense of the strength of the selfishness of the human heart, and the consequent dangers of acquisition, I will daily pray and strive for disinterested benevolence as the greatest good; also for

direction as to the amount of sacrifices I ought to make; and then agreeably to my prayers, act according to the dictates of conscience uttered in the presence of God.

14. I will frequently and at stated periods solemnly renew these or similar resolutions.

Now, if you refuse to make these solemn resolutions your own, can you assign any reason for such refusal, which you will be willing to utter in self-justification when facing your Final Judge?

Whatever theories we may adopt concerning volition, or the governing determinations of the mind, all will agree in the fact, that the energies of the human soul, when aroused, may be strung like fibres of steel, giving an adamantine firmness and indomitable force to the will. We have seen this exemplified in the fortitude with which one sometimes endures a surgical operation; in the heated courage of the soldier, rushing with the loud huzza into the very face of the engulphing battery; in the cool, calculating resolution which carries the unflinching column with steady tread into the very centre of bristling squares. All this

is but the strength of will when the energies of the soul are stirred. Now one's resolution may and should become thus iron-like in the war with his own covetousness. He should determine in the strength of grace to break it down, however much it may cost. God has given us this power of will, and to him we are responsible for its proper exercise; ever remembering that it is strengthened by cultivation or reiterated effort. The raw recruit cannot be trusted at the post of danger like the veteran, who has repeatedly nerved up his spirit, till by habit it has become as unyielding as a rock. The latter has learnt to be brave. So we should learn to be soldiers in the war with selfishness, by perseveringly girding our minds to the deadly conflict.—Has depraved man such energy of will in spreading devastation and death; and shall not Christians exhibit as great force of resolution in diffusing the blessings of salvation? Who dare say, I cannot, or will not, exercise it? Let us be mindful of our obligations. If our minds may be wrought up to such invincible firmness and energy of resolution to do evil; surely, God

assisting, they may not only be inspired with a lofty enthusiasm to resist the solicitations of self-shness, but also roused to a sublimity of generous emotions, to engage, like a Mills or a Howard, in disinterested and self-denying efforts for the good of others.

III. We are now ready to take the last step in erecting a general system of beneficence, viz.: the carrying into effect right principles and well-directed resolutions. While, on the one hand, the intellectual and emotional qualities of the mind give character and vitality to action; on the other hand our conduct exerts a powerful reflex influence on the affections and purposes. Nothing tends more to give strength and spirit to a mental principle than accordant action; and nothing tends more to obliterate an emotion from the breast, or to paralyze a resolution, than the neglect of its appropriate manifestations. However deeply the one may be engraven on the soul, or however solid the texture or vigorous the life of the other, a few instances of neglect or violation will strike them with the chills of death.

Principles and resolutions, then, are of little avail without corresponding efforts. The "well of water" must not only spring up in the soul, it must flow out in the life. We must act as well as think and resolve; and act, as if we *felt* that ourselves and all that we have belong to God by the twofold right of creation and redemption; act, as if selfishness were our deadliest foe, and as if it were our great business to attain its mortification and overthrow; act, as if disinterested love, a soul like angels, like God, were the greatest good to be possessed by an intelligent being; act, as if we were prayerfully watching the calls of Christ on our generosity, and were ready and determined manfully to meet them; act, in laying our pecuniary plans, as if the highest object of acquisition were the means of diffusing good; act, as if self-denial were the main condition of our being on earth, and as if the circumstances of the age were requiring of us peculiar sacrifices in order to rescue millions, perishing in mental thraldom, whose souls are as precious as our own; act, as if we were in earnest, as if the whole soul were kindled

to a blaze of zeal, and bent on the most determined efforts for the exaltation of Christ in the salvation of men; knowing that the time allotted for the accomplishment of a task eternal in its consequences, is but a hand-breadth.

Act with *forecast.* This is a point of unspeakable importance. I would reiterate and enforce the thought, till it shall be wrought into the very web of all our benevolent purposes. There must be *contrivance* to give. Worldly men make previous arrangements to increase their stores. Lovers of pleasure contrive to support their follies. Why should not lovers of Christ be equally wise to fill the world with light, and heaven with anthems?

Act *systematically.* With a mind illumined with knowledge, a conscience impressed with obligation, and a heart glowing with love to God and man, form an individual system of beneficence; and let it be one you will not blush to review in heaven. Be particularly careful, therefore, that it be such as will come most strongly in collision with the selfishness of the heart, and

yield the richest revenue to the Lord; requiring as generous and frequent contributions as circumstances will allow, agreeably to the Divine injunction: "Every man shall give as he is able, according to the blessing of the Lord thy God, which he hath given thee;" in a word, let it be such a system as you will be willing to hand in at the judgment-seat, as decisive testimony that you have loved your neighbor as yourself. And when it is formed, never violate its rules by giving *less*, except impelled by imperative necessity; though ever stand ready to deviate from it, when Providence commands, by giving *more*.

Let benevolence be ever operative, like the sun ever shining. Wait not for the modest poor, or heedlessly perishing, to ask for aid; but go forth in search of objects appropriate for philanthropy to relieve, to enlighten, to cheer. Obey the voice from heaven: "Open thy hand wide unto thy brother;" "Sow beside all waters;" scattering a little here and a little there, and thus, to the extent of ability, aid in bringing back "the state of

Eden's bloom," and planting trees of righteousness all over the world.

Let deeds of charity be consistent one with another, and harmonize with a general deportment, elevated to the true Gospel standard of self-consecration; so that they may exert an influence, not only in relieving the wants of the needy and forlorn, but as examples of heartfelt beneficence, inciting others to the glorious work. Let Christ, therefore, be the pattern of all charitable efforts. Let the love that moved him to endure a life of privation and a death of agony, take full possession of the soul, prompting to the same unwearied and self-denying activity in doing good. With a constancy and vigor based on this life-giving principle, let each one endeavor to make his influence felt throughout the world; becoming, in his sphere, like one of those fixed stars that sparkle in the midnight sky—a blazing sun to those that are near, a gem of sweetest ray to those afar.

Such is the system, and, as we believe, substantially the only universal system of beneficence, with which God will be well pleased. It grows

out of our relations to him as intellectual and moral beings. Its life-spring is in the heart. It is purely spiritual or moral in its character. It rejects all machinery, and can be permanently helped forward by no scheme of merely external actions. It occupies the whole soul; with its roots winding round every intellectual and virtuous principle, it shoots up its stately trunk, sending forth its far-reaching branches, whose leaves are for the healing of the nations.

It is a system forming an essential part of Christian character. It requires that the great themes of our meditation be spiritual and eternal, that the mind be so imbued with thoughts of God, his government and law, of Christ, his love, his sufferings and death, of the restorative scheme thereby wrought out, of its relation to this apostate world, of our responsibilities as co-workers with Christ in spreading the knowledge of his name, and of the consequences both to ourselves and others of fidelity to our trust—it requires that these thoughts be so thoroughly impressed, and the heart so permeated, warmed, and animated by

their influence, that they shall become, as it were, inherent elements of moral action, involuntarily suggesting themselves as often as occasions for their operation arise. But all this is but another process of thought and emotion descriptive of the *spiritually minded*. It also requires the same intellectual and moral discipline which is essential to the formation of the benevolent character. This does not consist in a single act, a single outgushing of generous activity, but in a series of generous actions, flowing from an established principle; a principle pervading the whole soul, never wavering, never succumbing to the biddings of selfishness. But the benevolent character thus deeply laid is the *Christian character*. The scheme further requires consistency of moral and religious conduct. While it no more demands regular and persevering beneficent action than it demands other Christian duties, it imperiously demands regular and persevering beneficent action as an essential branch of Christian conduct, inevitably resulting from those immutable principles which form the basis of the Christ-like character. Thus the

particular or individual system grows, by a moral necessity, out of the general system of thoughts, affections, and volitions, here unfolded; it being a moral impossibility for one cordially to adopt the latter, in all its length and breadth, without determining upon such a private system of beneficence as his means, his relations to God and to the wants and woes of our species, demand. To refuse this system of benevolent principles and correspondent actions, therefore, is to refuse to be spiritually minded; is to refuse to cultivate a benevolent character; is to refuse to exhibit consistency of holy conduct; is to refuse to exert all our powers and embrace all opportunities to do good; in a word, it is to wear a blot on our Christian name which many waters can never wash out.

Hence the beauty of the system,—general and particular—here presented, is that, resting down on the eternal and changeless foundations of the spiritual universe, and consequently harmonizing with the spirit of Revelation and with the laws of mind, it rises up and expands into a beautiful exhibition of the fruits of the Gospel, the legitimate

product of its holy precepts. It gives no encouragement to the idea that God's favor may be secured, or duty done, by any mere external system of munificence, any farther than the external system proceeds from right affections and sound principles. It must originate in the renewed heart, be nourished by the life of grace, and increase its productiveness as light and holiness increase in the soul. In its perfect development, *it is the full and symmetrical development of the Christian character.*

Thus it is a system equal in its pressure, and therefore adapted to fasten on the conscience of every one, whatever his age or circumstances. No one can justly plead exemption from its claims. None can reasonably propose questions of casuistry to shield his bosom from its shafts. None can shake off the convictions of duty it impresses, but by shutting its principles from the mind, or by rousing the heart to resistance. In short, it leaves every man to himself, facing his God, his conscience laid bare to the quenchless rays of truth.

CONCLUSION.

Who will refuse thus systematically to reflect, to feel, to resolve, to give? Will you, professed follower of the self-denying Jesus? Can you, "bought with blood divine," when looking around on the possessions God has bestowed, have a heart to deny that aid which undying millions demand? Is it not beyond expression inconsistent to profess to give yourself to Christ, and then withhold your property from him?—But what are your relations to him as implied in this profession? and what are his claims upon you, as growing out of it? With the last tribunal and the sorrows of Calvary in view, will you give these a moment's prayerful reflection?

Go back with me to those delightful scenes so full of gentle joy, of ineffable sweetness, and hallowed peace, when first you cast your all on Jesus, and felt

> "The Saviour's pard'ning blood,
> Applied to cleanse your soul from guilt
> And bring you home to God."

Then, calm and trustful in spirit, transported in the freshness of a new-born life, you could sing with a ravished heart,

> "I am my Lord's, and he is mine:
> He drew me—and I followed on—
> Charm'd to confess the voice divine."

These were precious seasons. "How sweet their mem'ry still!" Then came an hour of tender, impressive, and almost awful interest. You entered the sanctuary of God, and in the presence of men, of angels, and your adored Saviour, avouched the Lord Jehovah, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, to be your God, consecrating yourself and all your possessions, unreservedly, to his service. Was this an unmeaning ceremony? No. You remember the occasion, the hopes and fears of your trembling faith, those sweet experiences, those glimpses of your Redeemer's smiles, which forced the tear to your eye; the solemn and faltering accents of your beloved pastor; and the weeping sympathy of a dear father and mother—now, perhaps, gone to their rest—who had long yearned

over a thoughtless child. Or you may remember your soul's peaceful trust in God, as you stood *alone*, with no sympathizing kindred; and felt, as you tasted the cup,—the emblem of your Saviour's blood, and the pledge of the eternal sacrifice of yourself to him,—that you could cheerfully forsake brother and sister, father and mother, all, for Christ. It was a touching scene; and you thought you should never forget it And, ah! it never has been forgotten in heaven. The eternal Judge, and those blest spirits who affectionately stooped to sustain and strengthen you for the irrevocable vow, remember it.

Now have you acted up to this surrender of your all to Christ, especially in relation to the duty of beneficence? In that impressive hour, did you make a mental reservation, withholding certain sources of private gratification,—the privilege of using your property as you pleased, of seeing yourself and family supplied with the conveniences, the comforts, and even the luxuries of life, ere you attended to the cries of the myriads sinking to woes unutterable for the want of Gospel

light? Were you thus unfeeling? Did you think to deceive the heart-searching Jesus? Oh, no! I cannot believe it; and you are appalled at the suspicion. But what did you mean by those all-surrendering vows? What do you mean, often as you renew them at the sacramental board? Let the question come home to your conscience; *what do you mean?* If they lead you not to hold your property at the call of God, ought you not to tremble lest you never gave yourself away, and are, therefore, with all your professions an heir of hell? Did Christ once weep over covenant-breaking Jerusalem? Does he not now weep over you, as he thinks of all his agonies to rescue you from unquenchable fire; of your voluntary vows; your unfaithfulness; and your mockery, as perhaps you have prayed that the kingdoms of the world might speedily become his; while amid your numerous comforts, you have refused to deny yourself scarce a convenience, or even superfluity, for the salvation of those whom he died to redeem? How inconsistent! Well might tears still bathe the Saviour's cheeks. Oh think, are these the kind re-

turns you owe for pardoning love? Is it unreasonable that you spend your worldly goods for him, who shed his blood for you? Go, I beseech you, to your closet, and there plead, till from the heart you can say: "Lord, here I am and all I have. Take the worthless sacrifice, now and forever."

Will the rich, they who have enough and abound, reject this rational scheme of principles, feelings, actions? What treatment is this of the compassionate Giver of your abundance? Do you not owe to him alike your being and possessions? Perhaps you refuse to give even *yourselves* to him; and employ to private ends those bodily and mental powers with which you are endowed for his service. Is not this robbing God? And how is it with the favors of his hand? Have not the crucibles of your selfish hearts melted and moulded them into household gods? As the streams of Providence have poured in upon you to overflowing, instead of dispersing abroad as God intended, have you not carefully enlarged your own reservoirs so as to retain the whole? Thus grasping

all that lies within your reach of that wealth which God has created for the advancement of his kingdom, have you not withheld it from its appropriate channel, and thus become doubly guilty of robbing God?

What a spectacle do you present to holy intelligences! They behold you rational and accountable beings like themselves; upheld in existence by Jehovah's mercy, partaking freely of his bounties, and treasuring up future supplies; but resolutely refusing to share your abundance with the perishing, even when the generosity required would but enhance your personal enjoyment. And yet, perchance, you are the professed followers of the compassionate Jesus. Dare you compare your spirit and conduct with his?

Truly, you, who have redundant stores, sustain tremendous responsibilities; would that you might realize them. You enjoy glorious privileges; will you slight them? With the power, under God, of relieving the sorrowful, enlightening the ignorant, elevating the degraded, and diffusing a vital energy through every pore of this suffering world,

will you stand like some bleak Alpine cliff, breathing perpetual frost, merely an object for the curious to gaze upon? so live that your selfish heirs shall rejoice at your death, and the judgment-day clothe you with eternal shame?

Do you say, "My money is my own; I may use it as I please?" Hark! God thunders, "Thy gold and thy silver is mine." Will you trifle with Jehovah's voice, and incur his righteous wrath? Hear the terrible denunciations of James: "Go to, now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you. Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten. Your gold and silver is cankered; and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire." Absorbed in the pursuits of gain, or whirling on your glittering rounds of pleasure, you may heedlessly disregard the appeals of distressed humanity, and proudly congratulate yourselves on your exalted positions, your honors and flatteries; but, rely upon it, you are only heaping "treasure together for the last day." Every call of charity from which you turn

coldly away will be a drop of anguish to your undying soul. How trifling your gifts to the Lord, compared with the vastly greater sacrifices of many far poorer than yourself, and whom, perhaps, you now despise. When these shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father, where, O, where will you be found? O, how will all that affluence in which you have garnered up your hopes appear, when hearing the voice of your Final Judge, "Inasmuch as you did it not to one of the least of these my brethren, ye did it not to me;" and bereft of your treasures and your hopes together, you find the prison of despair a dread reality, where covetousness will eternally work without restraint, and unrelieved; a fire shut up in the soul, agonizing it evermore?

Will the young refuse to enter upon this systematic course of doing good?—You who are in the warm glow of youthful affections and sympathies, I presume are not prepared to answer in the negative. You feel that it would be delightful, the highest grade of human excellence, to go about scattering charities—feeding the hungry,

relieving distress, smoothing the dying pillow, and sending the light of salvation to those on whom the dayspring of the Saviour's mercy has never dawned. This, perhaps, you intend to do at some future time; but you cannot now; you have not the ability; you must first amass the means. But let me warn you; here lies the treacherous pitfall. You have within a subtle and malignant principle, whose maturity is utterly destructive of benevolence. This the very employment of acquiring the means of charity will fan to a flame, unless, in all your plans and avocations, you carry along with you the spirit of Christ's good-will to men. The work of charity must be begun in the infancy of the selfish tendencies. A small blaze among the withered leaves of autumn a child may extinguish; but when the winds have hurled it, and the wild fire is running and leaping from point to point, streaming up trees and wrapping the forest in sheets of flame, it will take the energies of thousands to quench it. So it is with the principle of avarice. It must be repressed early, before its giant coils wind around the entire heart,

crushing its better purposes. Hence, as the morning of life is peculiarly favorable to the formation and fixing of habits, the importance of inuring yourselves to battle with this inward foe, in this flexible season. Put on the armor at once, and learn to wield it; for victory is as much dependent on skill as on strength.

Let the spirit of benevolence be the warmest aspiration of the youthful breast. Let it be the early, the earnest, the daily inquiry, "What can I do for my race?" Good to others should be your aim when means are small. True, its light at first may be no more than the feeble glimmerings of the glow-worm by the pathway of the benighted traveller; yet it will be genial, soothing many a sad and torn heart. In the very commencement of business, then, cherish a Christ-like spirit; and, adopting a system of accordant action, maintain it all along the path of life; so that when you arrive at its close, it will be seen, a line of light stretching around the world, with many a flower of Paradise blooming on its borders. But wait till you obtain the means before you begin to seek in

earnest the benefit of others, and, unless Divine Grace powerfully interpose, by the time, in your own judgments, the means are procured, your hearts will have become like the nether millstone.

Be persuaded, then, to lay your youth a victim on the altar of charity. Let your whole being burn there till life is extinct; and when you enter upon the peaceful rest of heaven, you will find multitudes there, aided thither by your timely munificence, with whom you may unite in transporting hallelujahs forever.

Finally, let me entreat readers of every class deeply to ponder the subject here unfolded. No rational being, with any sense of his responsibilities, can treat it with indifference. I beseech you, pass not over these pages with a hasty glance, and then throw them aside. Meditate upon them till your hearts burn within you. Pray over them till you feel a harmony of soul with Christ; and, in this spirit, come to a solemn determination whether you will adopt or reject this system of views, of affections, of resolutions, and of accordant actions. Do one or the other. No other course

is either rational or christian. And while you deliberately decide, realize that the eye of the Triune Jehovah is fixed upon you, and that that dread Judge, before "whose face the earth and the heavens" shall flee away, will review the transaction. How solemn your position! What amazing consequences are depending on your present determination! It will affect your usefulness here, and your relations in eternity. You are striking a chord of the mighty harp of the universe, which will tremble with the songs of the redeemed, or the moanings of the damned. Can you touch it heedlessly?

THE END.

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